Qualitative Data Initiative

Qualitative data has long been used in primary socio-environmental research to explore additional and complementary dimensions of problems, questions and systems dynamics that cannot be adequately or fully measured by quantitative metrics alone. However, as open science and synthesis research has become increasingly common, and with it data sharing and data re-use, qualitative data remains under-accessed, under-utilized, and often simply unavailable. SESYNC is working to increase the use of qualitative data in SE synthesis research in order to broaden the evidence base and the methodological approaches that are possible for use by research teams.

SESYNC is in the process of developing resources and guidance to support researchers and teams both sharing and re-using qualitative data for socio-environmental synthesis. An initial workshop to explore benefits, challenges and opportunities for qualitative data use in socio-environmental synthesis was held in February 2017, and brought together a diverse group of researchers, funders, data management scientists, and representatives of data repositories and open science organizations [1]. The initial outputs of this workshop, described below, are meant to provide background and guidance for individuals and institutions from across the data life cycle interested in increasing support and capacity for qualitative data sharing and re-use. In the coming months, SESYNC will be developing additional resources and guidelines for researchers interested in sharing qualitative data (primary or secondary) that they have gathered, as well as for researchers interested in identifying and accessing qualitative data for use in socio-environmental synthesis projects. These resources will focus specifically on workflow and data management tools and approaches, as well as analytical tools for data gathering and processing (for one example, see SESYNC's text mining lesson [2]).

White paper: Qualitative data sharing and re-use for socio-environmental systems research: A synthesis of opportunities, challenges, resources and approaches [3]

This white paper discusses opportunities, challenges, resources and approaches for qualitative data sharing and re-use for socio-environmental research. The paper is organized into five sections to address the following objectives:

1. Define qualitative data and discuss the benefits of sharing it along with its role in socio-environmental synthesis;
(2) Review the practical, epistemological, and ethical challenges regarding sharing such data;

(3) Identify the landscape of resources available for sharing qualitative data including repositories and communities of practice

(4) Develop a novel framework for identifying levels of processing and access to qualitative data; and

(5) Suggest roles and responsibilities for key actors in the research ecosystem that can improve the longevity and use of qualitative data in the future.

**Two-page resources for data life-cycle actors**

**Researchers** [4]: Researchers from many disciplinary and institutional backgrounds are foundational to the process of generating, sharing and re-using qualitative data, and they play a key role as well in building networks and capacity for data sharing and data re-use. This two-page resource guide offers recommendations for actions that individual researchers can take to encourage and support qualitative data sharing and re-use.

**Research Institutions** [5]: Research institutions, both academic and government agencies, and their staff, including administrators, librarians, and institutional review boards (IRBs), have several distinct roles to play in supporting and facilitating both sharing and re-use of qualitative data. This two-page resource guide offers recommendations for actions that research institutions can take to encourage and support qualitative data sharing and re-use.

**Data Repositories and Open Science Organizations** [6]: As the open science approach to sharing research data has been increasingly adopted by individual researchers and research communities of practice, public and private investments have supported the creation and maintenance of both data repositories and open science organizations that develop and pilot related cyberinfrastructure. This two-page resource guide offers recommendations for actions that data repositories and open science organizations can take to encourage and support qualitative data sharing and re-use.

**Journals and Publishers** [7]: Much like data repositories often act as brokers for data discovery, journals and publishers can act as both catalyst and enforcer to encourage data sharing and appropriate data citation during re-use. This two-page resource guide offers recommendations for actions that journals and publishers can take to encourage and support qualitative data sharing and re-use.

**Funders** [8]: Much like journals, publishers and repositories, public and private research funders sit at a critical nexus in the research and data ecosystem to facilitate and encourage qualitative data sharing and re-use. This two-page resource guide offers recommendations for actions that research funders can take to encourage and support qualitative data sharing and re-use.

**Source URL:** https://www.sesync.org/for-you/cyberinfrastructure/research-and-tools/qualitative-data-initiative

**Links**
[8] https://www.sesync.org/qualitative-data-recommendations-for-research-funders