# Theory and practice in science-stakeholder dialogue

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# Stakeholder dialogue types

| Dialogue Type | Initiators | Explicit Objectives | Stakeholder type |
|---|---|---|---|
| Policy | Policy makers, bureaucrats | Support for policies, monitoring structure | Organised interest groups, corporations, SMEs, NGOs, scientists, local authorities citizens (consultation on coastal defence UK, citizen's jury) |
| Multi-stakeholder platforms | International organisations | Partnerships to influence policy and governance | Governments, corporations, NGOs, scientists (Rio, Johannesburg) |
| Corporate | Corporations | Adapt to society's expectations in business strategies and practice, | Governments, NGOs, customers, employees, suppliers, communities, scientists (Shell since Brent Spar) |
| Science-based | Scientists | Improve understanding, combining knowledge bases, social relevance | Corporations, SMEs, NGOs, policy-makers, sector representatives and advisers, citizens (e.g. ECF, ATEAM, VULCAN) |

# When is stakeholder dialogue advisable?

- To build/test hypotheses, assumptions, new IA methods and tools, scenarios, results
- To identify missing expertise and data
- To explore values and perceptions
- To create synergies and consensus between scientific and non-scientific community
- To better understand and model differences between key actors
- To explicitly incorporate normative and ethical issues
- To influence policy and behaviour

# When may Stakeholder Dialogue not be advisable/profitable?

- Exploratory/fundamental research
- Research on earth systems dynamics at large temporal scales
- Nitty gritty of modelling development /monitoring,
- etc…

# What can scientists gain?

- Reality check
- New perspectives (surprises)
- Shaping new research areas
- Improving science's (direct) relevance for society
- Increased science's transparency, accessibility, and usability
- Mutual learning, understanding, transdisciplinarity
- Informing and influencing decision making
- Valuable networks
- Recognition
- Funding

# What can stakeholders gain?

- Access to new science and information sources
- Possibility to influence the research agenda
- Possibility to express their views and needs
- Mutual learning
- Valuable networks
- A scientific stamp on there activities

# What is a science-stakeholder dialogue?

Here defined as:

" a structured communicative process of linking scientists with actors that are relevant for the research problem at hand"

(Welp & de la Vega-Leinert, in prep).

# Levels of stakeholder involvement

| Participation | Stakeholder Role | Exercise goals | Impact on research | Whose in Control? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low (once) | Witness – look around | Result communication /dissemination | ~ Nil (but may look good in reports) | SH: None<br>SC: All of it |
| Medium (discretely at key phases) | Adviser – evaluate | Present research and obtain feedback | Can have a large impact if feedback is accommodated | SH: a bit (indirectly via acceptability)<br>SC: always have the last word |
| High (throughout) | Collaborator – participate | Design and test hypotheses, models, indicators, assumptions, scenarios etc… | Large if the dialogue is well run | Shared decision power and responsibility |
| Very High | Commissioner – initiates and uses | Fulfill information and knowledge needs of commissioner | Can be too large | SH: can have a lot<br>SC: may lose decision and dissemination power |

# Some methods and tools

| Method | What for? | How? | Type of results |
|---|---|---|---|
| Data collection methods:<br>e.g. expert elicitation, backcasting approach (tolerable windows) | Identify and discuss values and perception, tease out expert/local knowledge | Questionnaires, workshops, focused group, interview | Qualitative to semi-quantitative |
| Data analysis:<br>e.g. Multi-criteria analysis, Bayesian networks | Frame problem, represent divergences, explore inconsistencies in views, find consensus, develop model of social/organisational learning | Participatory methods + visualisation techniques | Semi – quantitative to quantitative results |

# Major issues to consider

- Participants expectations, opinions and interests
- Levels of discourse, understanding and expertise
- How to communicate complexity and uncertainty?
- How to sensitise stakeholders to the research?
- Biased stakeholder representation
- Prejudices and cultural differences
- Fears and insecurities
- etc…

# Key elements to a successful dialogue

- Open minds, desire to learn and collaborate
- Clear objectives, rules of dialogue and role of participants
- Build a common language
- Building trust (requires time, iteration, effort)
- Understanding of group dynamics
- Flexibility to change research course if required
- And last but NOT least… relevant, exciting, scientifically challenging and credible research(ers) !!!