

Call for Papers:

Formalised and Non-Formalised Methods in Resource Management

Knowledge and Learning in Participatory Processes

Workshop, 21/22 September 2006, Osnabrück

Participatory processes are becoming increasingly important in the management of natural resources. Policy makers, ‘experts’, and ‘lay persons’ – citizens or representatives of organised interest groups – are increasingly collaborating in public decisions on issues such as water management or land use planning. Different forms of involvement have been established, allowing for varying degrees of interaction, e.g. focus groups, citizens’ juries, consensus-conferences, or stakeholder platforms, to name but a few.

Given the complexity of issues to decide upon and the uncertainties involved, one main reason to involve non-state actors in public decisions is to incorporate different sources of knowledge and to foster social learning, thus allowing for potentially better, i.e. more informed and creative, decision-making. Expected outcomes are thus learning, facilitation of agreements, and improved communication among participants.

A spectrum of methods, instruments, tools, and models is available to structure information flows in these participatory processes. Depending on their goals and context, more or less formalised methods can be employed:

- Methods to elicit knowledge and assumptions of individuals range from qualitative interviews (non-formalised) to cognitive mapping (likewise qualitative, but strongly formalised).
- Scenario building exercises range from non-formalised, narrative story lines to formalised computer modelling.
- Role playing games range from informal discussions to formalised game settings and up to computer-implementations (agent-based models).
- Evaluation methods range from informal discussions to formalised procedures of Multi-Criteria Analysis.
- Generally, knowledge and information can be represented and conveyed either in an informal, narrative way, or with the aid of formal, often computer-based tools such as Decision Support Systems including Geographic Information Systems. In recent years one observes increased efforts to combine informal and formal approaches.

Most of the formalised methods involve some kind of modelling in order to derive generalisations from particular facts or situations, and to separate important from less important information. While more formalised methods have the advantage of eliciting, handling and delivering focused, clear and unambiguous information (or of making uncertainties and ambiguities transparent), their use also involves important challenges:

- The process of formalisation usually is more laborious, requires more time and specific expertise, or trained personnel, and often technical equipment, and is thus more costly.
- Stakeholders may have difficulties to accept some more formalised methods as they might not comprehend all modelling steps and thus distrust certain model implications, or simply dread the required efforts.

Researchers dealing with these questions from the perspective of different disciplines are invited to submit abstracts for papers. The workshop's main areas of application will be land-use planning and water management. Of special interest are papers that discuss

- the strengths and weaknesses of formalised and non-formalised methods in participatory resource management with special attention to the conditions under which formalised, or non-formalised methods, respectively, are most appropriate;
- how the choice of methods depends on the goals and context of the process as well as on the particular individuals involved in the process;
- possible trade-offs between the degree of formalisation of methods and the degree of participation;
- integration of formal and informal approaches;
- the relation of method-driven participatory processes and policy implementation.

Conceptual and methodological contributions, empirical analyses of applications of selected methods and case studies are equally welcome.

On the basis of the submitted abstracts, a maximum number of 15 papers will be selected for invitation to the workshop. After notification of acceptance (30th June 2006), authors will be asked to submit short versions of their papers (1500 to 2000 words) until 31st August in order to allow the participants to get a more complete picture of all papers to be presented. A selection of papers will be published in a peer reviewed journal or book.

Abstracts of no more than 400 words should be sent to all members of the scientific committee until 15th June 2006.

The Osnabrück workshop is organised in the framework of the German-Austrian research project PartizipA and of the EU Concerted Action Harmoni-CA/WP5.



PartizipA – Participative Modelling, Actor and Ecosystem Analysis in Regions of Intensive Agriculture (10/2003–12/2006) is funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research (grant no. 07 VPS 10). The interdisciplinary project analyses societal and ecological processes in agricultural regions against the background of agriculture-induced environmental problems, changing EU regulations and economical conditions. Along with an analysis of actors and institutions and a model of regional nutrient flows, different participatory methods such as interviews, cognitive mapping, focus groups and a stakeholder platform are employed. See www.partizipa.net.



Workpackage 5 (WP5) is part of the European Concerted Action **Harmoni-CA – Harmonised Modelling Tools for Integrated River Basin Management** (grant no. EVK1-CT1-2002-00192; 10/2002–09/2007). WP5 focuses on “Integrated Assessment and the science-policy interface”. Next to a series of workshops where direct exchange between water managers and tool developers on issues linked to the WFD is promoted, WP5 has organized also a series of methodological workshops where scientists discuss the state of the art of integration, in particular of economic aspects, stakeholder participation in modelling as well as risk assessment and uncertainty. See www.harmoni-ca.info.

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