

Tools for Local Stakeholders in Radioactive Waste Governance/Long Version

WP1

Challenges and benefits of selected PTA techniques PTA-1

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Tools for local stakeholders in radioactive waste governance: Challenges and benefits of selected Participatory Technology Assessment techniques

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REASON AND ASSIGNMENT

Work Package 1 (WP1) of COWAM 2 aims at capacity building among local and regional stakeholders in radioactive waste governance. Appropriate techniques may be provided by, *i. a.*, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) or Participatory Technology Assessment (PTA). Technology assessment is a “scientific, interactive and communicative process which aims to contribute to the formation of public and political opinion on societal aspects of science and technology” [25:74][26:14]. The attribute “participatory” emphasises the active involvement of societal stakeholders as discussants and assessors. The present study was commissioned by the participants of the 1st Meeting of WP1 and named PTA-1 study. Since the 3rd Meeting, of February 2005, will be held together with WP2, the focus is enlarged to a look at the link between the local and the national levels of the decision-making process, precisely the issue WP2 is concerned with.

OBJECTIVES

The investigation consists of three parts and shall provide an input to the – empirical – PTA-2 study to be undertaken by SCK•CEN (called “lens”):

- A.** Compilation of – selected – existing PTA methods and procedures identifying requisites, practices, benefits, and challenges to answer the key questions in the context of WP1 about a PTA “toolbox”: “*What can you apply, when can you apply, and what is needed to apply?*” The multi-dimensional context of a possible “PTA situation” is analysed; suitable and non-suitable methods, techniques and procedures are discussed.
- B.** Set of criteria of strengths and weaknesses of PTA methods, recommendations
- C.** Blueprint for checklist and evaluation of a PTA[-2] demonstration exercise in a volunteer local community.

The present Interim Report complies with part **A** and is designed to be an input for discussion around part **B**.

FOCUS AND LIMITATIONS

In view of the call for practicability – within the COWAM 2 context – the aim of the study is not to be overly systematic in classifying tools and techniques of PTA within all possible settings but to provide an up-front overview for local stakeholders willing to participate in radioactive waste governance. Contrary to mainstream political science [46:44], it is assumed that nuclear issues, even if “value” issues, can be tackled with ADR/PTA techniques. This also results in leaving aside the lesser means and lower levels of involvement (information and con-

sultation, see Figure below) and not focussing on outcome analysis (*ex post* evaluation)¹. In return, concrete management issues (like facilitation, quality assurance, *etc.*) are looked at. It goes without saying that no single tool or approach matches the needs and context of every country and situation.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fact sheets ● Web sites ● Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public comment ● Focus groups ● Surveys ● Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops ● Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen Advisory Committees ● Consensus-building ● Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen juries ● Ballots ● Delegated decisions

Figure: The emphasis with COWAM 2 lies on the right side: with involvement, collaboration and empowerment (© IAP 2004²)

Methodologically, we encounter a state of infancy with respect to participative techniques. In one of the latest – and probably most comprehensive – reviews of existing public-participation evaluation studies, Rowe & Frewer 2004 observe: “Without typologies of mechanisms and contexts, and an attempt by researchers to adequately define the exercise(s) they are evaluating against these, little progress will be made in establishing a theory of ‘what works best when’” [15:551]. Reviewing thirty studies, they conclude that the number of methods “is large and seemingly growing” and add that these approaches “are not generally well defined, and this may cause confusion” [*ibid.*:548]. The same applies to the context in which these techniques were implemented: “[W]hat is required is a typology of context, identifying the key contextual variables” [*ibid.*:549]. This confirms observations made over 10 years ago [17:187].

Many of the methods presented in various lists [33][36][37][39][40] are not more than adaptations from general social research methodology (polls, surveys, interviews, delphi technique, focus groups) or from group moderation and workshop techniques (policy workshops, open

¹ An evaluation of the PTA-2 exercise, however, is foreseen.

² This figure – as many others in the field – is based on the “ladder of citizen participation” by Arnstein [2:217].

space, panels). Only few have been explicitly developed in the context of participatory approaches (Citizen Advisory Group, Consensus Conference, Future Search Conference, Co-operative Discourse, Area Development Negotiation) [32][55][47][48][49][50][51][52][54][53].

SETTING: SEVEN FRAMING PRINCIPLES

Since the underlying driver of this study is the empowerment of local stakeholders special attention has to be given to the frame (or context, setting) within which involvement takes place. In the following, **aspects and principles (in bold)** to be considered when choosing techniques are proposed and shortly explained. Main *Conclusions* are highlighted in *italics*.

1. Consider level of decision (local ... supra-national)

According to the OECD, in an overview of country policies, information is a “basic precondition” and consultation “central to policy-making” whereas active participation (the issue here) is “the new frontier”: “Only a few OECD countries have begun to explore such approaches and experience to date is limited” [12:3]. It is thus not surprising that mechanisms for integration of enhanced public involvement into policy making are rarely implemented (like popular legislative initiatives or citizen-initiated referenda). (Local and regional) radioactive waste issues are an aftermath of a (national) nuclear energy policy – this asymmetry has to be balanced with appropriate means.

2. Guarantee for integration into policy making

With any technique selected it has to be ensured that it is integrated into an existing or envisaged decision-making process, preferably in a formalised and legal procedure such as a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) [23][24][21] or an environmental impact assessment (EIA) [22][38].

3. Consider phase of decision process (problem recognition ... implementation)

Every tool has to be matched with the goals to be achieved and with the respective situation to be dealt with. Attention is to be given to the point where the process is in the policy cycle: design, implementation or evaluation [13:22]. Problems may be recognised in consensus conferences or round tables whereas institutionalised site committees may have to oversee project implementation and evaluations are best done by independent high-level bodies.

4. Respect degree of escalation (fact-finding phase ... type of “trench warfare”)

The type of political debate has an implication on the choice of technique. If the societal opinions have been fixed in a long-standing struggle, such as in Germany, there usually is no use in setting up public consensus conferences. Consensus conferences with clearly identified stakeholder group representations might be more purposeful [11].

5. Prove commitment and accountability

Politicians, public officials and senior management (of the organising institutions) need to be committed to active participation from stakeholders and the public. Citizens' and stakeholders' inputs are accounted for by governments and para-official institutions (like radioactive waste implementers). The fundamental attitude that participation indeed is desired is particularly decisive. This is not self-evident. In a comparative study, Weible and colleagues (2004) established that some stakeholders in fact prefer a classic linear scientific top-down approach. Especially scientists were against more collaborative approaches and “interpreted the public meetings as a frontal attack on the validity of science” [19:202]. Yet not only scientists, as well the public at large, have divergent views. Weblner and colleagues (2001) distin-

gushed five different perspectives among the public – some of them conflicting strongly with each other [18].

6. Grant rights and resources

Objectives for, and limits to, involvement have to be defined at the outset of the process so that all participants are aware of the scope and can decide accordingly.

7. Ensure continuity and establish adequate mechanisms

The duration and quality of engagement has to be adequate. Some degree of institutionalisation has to be provided for. In line with this, small-scale and one-shot activities are not recommended (e. g., focus groups, voting conferences, or panels/task forces/community fairs, respectively). Apart of an honest commitment by (national) public lead agencies, innovative political and administrative institutions may ensure sustained and cross-level dialogue, substantively, by specific policy or advisory bodies [29] or, for professional methodical support, TA institutions [30].

IMPLEMENTATION: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The criteria proposed below are to be checked in the selection and assessment of each PTA technique. The list is primarily based on the following sources: [1][3][4][6][8][9][10][16][20][26][37][41][44][54][43][49]. *Criteria* are given in *italics*, below each of them follows a list of potential indicators or questions which could be used for assessment.

A. Input

- *Available resources (time, budget, flexibility, etc.):*
Sufficient available resources, both for the lead (organising) agency and all involved stakeholders to cover their expenses.
- *Definition of problem, goals, rules and success criteria:*
Clearly defined or yet to be determined/discussed in the process? Defined status and follow-up of the process (preparation of decision(s) to be taken in the process). Clarification of issue or consensus-orientation?
- *Existing views/conflicts:*
Degree of social consciousness/concern? Are conflicts known or should they be elicited in/through the process? Views already too entrenched, gridlocked?
- *Existing knowledge/competence (content level):*
Sufficient knowledge/scientific understanding existing or to be fostered in the process? Problem too complex? Knowledge evenly distributed or to be disseminated in the process?
- *Existing knowledge/competence (process level):*
Participants/project leaders familiar with structure and intent of the process? Confidence of participants in the process?
- *Institutional background:*
Credibility of the lead agency, attitude towards lead agency? Necessity for independent "process facilitator"? Commitment of lead agency? Independence of lead agency?
- *Participants/stakeholders:*
Which groups to be involved (distinct stakeholder groups ... public at large)? How many stakeholders? Who decides on number and recruitment (self-selection, selection or election)? Composition of (potential) participants homogeneous/heterogeneous? Representative or convenience sample? Voluntary or actively recruited participation? Full range of perspectives represented? Can participants easily reach meetings? (Potential) participants willing to participate? Distinctive roles for different participants? Existing relationships/networks among (potential) participants?

B. Process

- *Goal formulation, success criteria*
Goals and success clearly defined? Consented definitions of terms? Assessed on individual level and synthesised? Tasks for all participants clearly defined? Progress regularly reviewed and evaluated?
- *Organisational structure*
Bottom up or top down? Lead agency dedicated to form/guide/facilitate the process? Commitment of adequate resources by lead agency? Independence of lead agency? Who participates? (recruitment of stakeholders successful, influential decision makers or junior staff) Degree of participants' control (agenda setting, establishing rules; selecting experts and information; who presents, who interprets information)? Resource accessibility for all participants (equity)?
- *Operational structure*
Project management (milestones and regular progress review, ongoing documentation, etc.)? Early involvement of all participants? Goal orientation? Adequacy of time to consider, discuss and challenge information? Time management? Conflict management, handling of difficulties? Lessons learnt from failures in the course of the project?
- *Decision-making process*
Clearly structured (operational management, appropriate procedures, flexible/adaptable process, applied methods validated)? Knowledge contributions (clearly structured, clarified and distinctive roles of all participants)? Decision making transparent, traceability of process and argumentation? Mitigation of strong vested interests/power imbalance? Confidence in process?
- *Communication*
Good communication, focus on consensus, fairness? Communication between lead agency and participants (two-way, face-to-face, ongoing)? Regular feedback? Deliberation takes place? Mutual respect? Information accessible, readable, digestible? Sufficient shared understanding/knowledge? Participants able and allowed to contribute?

C. Output (=products) incl. outcome (=overall effects)

- *Written products*
How are generated insights, ideas, recommendations, etc. recorded? (minimum quality assurance) Distribution of products? Usability? Media coverage? Initiation of public communication process?
- *Decisions*
Amount of additional information collected? Type(s) and relevance of knowledge generated? Degree of awareness? Common understanding of the problem? Public values incorporated in decisions? Decisions consistent? Influence on policy-/decision making? Impact on corporate policy-making procedures?
- *Process results*
Process itself as a goal? More trust/legitimacy of result? Diversity of views mapped out? Conflict resolved among competing interests, achievement of consensus? Confidence among participants increased? Knowledge gained by participants (mutual learning)? Degree of trust in public, etc. agencies consolidated/restored/decreased? Networks (national, international) enlarged?
- *Evaluation*
Critical review of the process by all participants, reflection on lessons learned? Experiences documented? Adequacy, success of process and results assessed? Formal evaluation carried out? Ideas for further refinement or fundamental change of the applied method collected?

It is obvious that many criteria are generic and have to be coped with/fulfilled when applying all techniques but the techniques recommended below are characterised by a higher level of

participation than others. Some criteria are determining underlying factors (like competence and fairness issues), others are just interlinked (such as representativeness and legitimacy).

SELECTION OF TECHNIQUES

Given the complex setting in radioactive waste governance it is obvious that either more multi-level mixed and sophisticated technique **packages** or **institutionalised variants** are favoured (see table below). Tailored approaches like the local committees in Belgium (Local Partnerships, STOLA [56]/MONA) or France (CLI or CLIS, Comités locaux d'information [et de suivi] [34]) may be subsumed under the heading "Citizen Advisory Group". AkEnd proposed an open procedural framework within which a selection of techniques may be applied [31]. Advanced conventional political instruments, such as local initiatives, referenda and vetoes, are left out.

The following techniques were chosen adequate and, thus, for presentation:

- **Consensus Conference (CC)**
- **Future Search Conference (FSC)**
- **Cooperative Discourse (CD)**
- **Area Development Negotiation (ADN)**
- **Citizen Jury (CJ)**
- **Citizen Advisory Group (CAG)**
- **Multi-criteria Mapping (MCA)**

The labels of the techniques are somewhat arbitrary, accordingly the Cooperative Discourse corresponds to the Participatory Decision Analysis as portrayed in [44:27], even as political dialogue supported by project management as termed in [46]. Future Search Conferences are sometimes called Scenario Workshops. The tool range of structured dialogue goes down the line all the way to pragmatic amateurish round tables as set up in Switzerland in the 1990s for mediation attempts between implementers, national administrators, and environmental organisations [45][35].

For this stage, we restrict our presentation to some major features, namely the following:

- Description
- Requirements
- Number of participants
- Duration
- Application
- Advantages
- Disadvantages
- Case studies
- References

Further details will be developed in the course of the project.

Technique	Description	Requirements	Number of participants	Duration	Application	Advantages	Disadvantages	Case studies/References
Consensus Conference (CC)	Panel of citizens develops understanding of technical or scientific issues in dialogue with experts and – in general – reach consensus on issues to debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled facilitators • Briefing materials presenting issues • Expert witnesses • Participants representing different views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 20 citizens (if issue open) / stakeholders (if issue already positioned) • Up to 20 experts • Facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference: 3 – 5 days and preparatory weekends • Process: 4 – 6 months 	Early phase of a decision-making process to obtain views (initial views: public CC; de-escalation attempts: stakeholder CC, e. g., radioactive waste governance RWG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public access to experts • Open events • Panel controls content of process • Can empower participants • Brings together people from different fields and perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time restrictions to understand issue • Cost and time intensive • Issue of representativeness • Consensus may not be reached 	Applied on the issue of genetically modified organism in various countries (DK, N, F, UK, NZL, CH); 1999: CC in RWG organised by UK CEED (Centre of Excellence in Eating Disorders)/[41]
Future Search Conference (FSC)	Tool for planning and conflict resolution and means of eliciting new ideas, brings together (a) group(s) of people and leads them into a dialogue on past, present and future desires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled facilitators • Creativity and divergent thinking exhibited by participants • Detailed schedule of conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimal size: about 20 participants • Several dozen up to hundreds in parallel groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference: 2 – 3 days • Process: months up to years 	Early phase of a decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can involve hundreds of people • Individuals are experts • Can lead to substantial changes • Integration of intuitive and analytic modes of thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistically challenging • May be difficult to gain complete commitment from all stakeholders 	Applied in a wide range of sectors (e. g., banking business, transportation issues in communities, environmental issues) all over the world/[50][54]

Technique	Description	Requirements	Number of participants	Duration	Application	Advantages	Disadvantages	Case studies/References
Cooperative Discourse (CD)	Three-step-procedure involving relevant stakeholder groups (to identify concerns and evaluation criteria = 'values'), experts from different disciplines (to evaluate performance of policy options of all 'value' dimensions), representative citizens (to evaluate potential solutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled facilitators • Both systematic and anecdotal knowledge • Variability of options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder groups • Experts • Citizens (20 – 200) • Research team • Deliberation process: up to 5 persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen panels: Seminars of 3 – 5 days and several preparatory meetings • Process: up to 6 months 	Entire decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings together different perspectives: stakeholder groups' interest, (technical) expertise, citizens' acceptability (elicited preferences) • Can lead to social and technical robust solutions • May foster interactive understanding between administration/government officials, stakeholders, citizens, technical experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find relevant stakeholder groups as well as citizens randomly selected • Possible lack of experience of citizens in decision-making issues 	Applied in Germany (national energy policy, 1982), Switzerland (landfill issues in the canton Aargau, 1993) and the United States (sewage sludge management in New Jersey, 1988)/[51]
Area Development Negotiation (ADN)	Six step procedure using a set of methods, and involving stakeholders (groups) as well as scientific expertise. A core element is the 'exploration course' providing an assessment of preferences of stakeholder groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The technique is embedded in a comprehensive case study setting • Participants authorised by law or democratic rules • Needs a team of skilled facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 – 20 stakeholders representing divergent interests • a team of skilled facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 – 5 meetings of half a day • Process: 4 months up to 1 – 2 years 	Entire decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can identify domains of consensus as well as conflict potential among stakeholder groups • Facilitates consensus building • Enables negotiation and bargaining process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue of representativeness • Find partners able and willing to participate in an intensive and interactive dialogue and process • Time and cost intensive 	Applied in transdisciplinary ETH-NSSI case studies on different issues (urban and regional development, urban mobility) in Switzerland and Sweden/[54][53]

Technique	Description	Requirements	Number of participants	Duration	Application	Advantages	Disadvantages	Case studies/References
Citizen Jury (CJ)	Group of ordinary citizens empanelled to learn about an issue, cross-examine witnesses, make recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires skilled facilitator • Commissioning body must follow recommendations or explain why not • Initial briefing materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 – 20 people (members of the public) • Experts from different area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting: up to 5 days or 2 weekends • Process: 3 months 	Early phase of a decision-making process to obtain views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to develop deep understanding of an issue • Public can identify with the “ordinary” citizen • Public access to experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource-intensive (time and costs) • Always non-binding with no legal standing • No representativeness 	Applied in the health area/[15][41]
Citizen Advisory Group (CAG)	Group of stakeholders representing various community interests or expertise, to provide informed input (advisory body assisting decision makers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define roles and responsibilities up front • Be forthcoming with information • Use a credible process • Select members carefully • Use third-party facilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group of (10 – 20) stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurring meetings • Eventually institutionalised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At any point in the decision-making process but seems to be mostly effective in the early stages • Possibly institutional instrument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides for detailed analyses of issues • Participants gain understanding of others’ perspectives, leading to compromise • Commissioning of expertise, sanctioning and veto depending on mandate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General public may not embrace committee’s recommendations • Members may not achieve consensus • Organiser must accept need for give-and-take • Time- and labour-intensive 	STOLA/MONA, Belgium; CLI[S], France/[15][55]
Multi-criteria Mapping (MCA)	Group of stakeholders analyses different options of an issue in a structured way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants covering a wide range of technical and socio-political perspectives • Skilled facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 – 20 stakeholders • Experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting: 1 day+ • Process: 4 weeks+ 	Early phase of a decision-making process to obtain views or entire process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured evaluation of issues • Can provide additional options/strategies covering a wide range of considerations • Identify values and priorities of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of people to involve in process • Representativeness • Can be time- and cost-intensive 	Applied with genetically modified organism issues/[41][57]

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Neither choosing the “right” technique nor the “right” combination of different techniques seems trouble-free, nor the actual planning and implementation of the chosen approach. Yet after a first analysis of evidence, some tentative recommendations can be drawn, given in **bold** below. In the further course of COWAM 2 these preliminary findings will be supplemented and contrasted against our own experiences from the assessment of different techniques with our set of criteria.

Framing is more important than the technique chosen

More important than the specific PTA technique chosen is an adequate framing of the process set off. This is illustrated by Renn, who states some conditions for using the model of Cooperative Discourse: variability of options, equity of exposure, personal experience, openness of the sponsor/lead agency, provision of a supervisory board [51:3053-4]. Yet, even the openness of sponsors is questioned as “at the moment official support for greater participation often does not seem to be rising from strong cultural depths but feels more like a reluctant response to decision-making difficulties” [14:129]. There is clear evidence that divergent views exist and can influence the process and success of a participatory project [19]. A clear commitment from all parties involved seems indispensable.

Representation of different (social) groups is crucial

Participatory approaches, by their very name, depend on the participation of stakeholders, *i.e.*, people with a stake. Yet, in most projects rather few participants from a restricted number of (social) groups are involved. “[There is] a fundamental problem of size: fair representation can only actually be achieved by inviting all people with a stake, and this is clearly unrealistic, given that large numbers could not be accommodated even if all invitees agreed to attend” [49:115]. This is aggravated by the possibility that “public may not be that willing to participate in time consuming, face-to-face processes, especially if they cannot be assured that their involvement will make a difference” [1:248]. What is necessary here is a “buy-in at the community level, especially by civic leaders, to mobilize citizen deliberation” [1:248]. Coverage can be improved: “There are three solutions that might be considered ... to consult more widely on who should be invited prior to the meeting ... to invite a greater number of participants, but then to conduct much of the discussion in smaller ‘break-out’ groups ... to hold one or more follow-up conferences, in which problems identified in the first conference ... could be dealt with” [49:115].

Output is more than decision taking

Sometimes participatory approaches are only understood to improve actual decision making. Yet there is much more that forms the potential outcomes of a participatory project: “The perceived value of consultative practices in a well-ordered democracy lies not in the fact that the public has any direct involvement in, or control over, decision making, for this is clearly not the case. Their potential lies instead in features such as the information they provide to decision makers, the legitimacy they add to policy outcomes, and the positive effect they have on civil society and the development of a more informed and civil democratic culture.” [6:420]. This is as well recognised by the people involved who claim that they have learned much throughout the project: “This [*i.e.*, learning] was clearly the most important priority for a number of participants, more so than actually influencing future policy” [49:167]. One may add that hopefully mutual learning takes place.

Good match of technique and context is necessary

The match of specific context and chosen technique is crucial: “[T]he potential occurrence of unintended side effects should never be disregarded. Any participatory approach has limitations and shortcomings. These are often not intrinsic properties of particular settings but rather correspond to situations where the chosen approach is not adapted to the context” [16:24]. As pointed out above, project framing seems very important. To truly achieve a better match of context and technique, some challenges remain. The large and growing body of techniques is not associated with more stringent and well-defined application. Rowe & Frewer, as mentioned, regret the lack of “a typology of context, identifying the key contextual variables”. [15:549]. The suitability of particular techniques in respective environments requires adequate evaluation for which traditional policy evaluation criteria [7] are not sufficient because, firstly, subjective elements, such as the appraisal of the participants themselves, are usually not considered (unlike in [20]) and, secondly, convincing evaluations pin down considerable resources [46:42]. This has already been put forward by Fiorino in 1990: The “principal research need is for institutional policy analysis that relates participatory mechanisms to different kinds of technological policy problems” [37:238].

Combination of different techniques and more intense methods is preferred

Rather than proposing one specific technique most studies conclude that different techniques should be combined. “Complex decisions ... require a decision-support framework in which multiple methods are integrated to allow for multicriteria decision-making with full public participation” [14:129]. Techniques should complement each other [37:238]. The same holds for the relation with the democratic process as participatory approaches should complement rather than substitute broader democratic processes [3]. With respect to intensity of the process, most studies agree that “it was in the more intensive participatory processes ... that they provided more input in the way of ideas, information, and analysis” [4:746]. “Across all the conceptions of quality, one result is consistent – more intense forms of stakeholder involvement are more likely to produce higher-quality decisions” [4:747]; “more intensive processes – such as negotiations, mediations, and consensus-based advisory committees – were clearly more effective than less intensive processes at achieving all social goals” [5:17]. This hold not for all contexts though: “[M]ore intensive processes were less successful ... in engaging or representing the wider public in decision making. Participants in more intensive participatory processes were more likely to be socio-economically unrepresentative of the wider public” [5:17].

Process matters and demands active formation

Implementing a participatory process is a challenging endeavour. The process itself matters, especially good communication, government commitment; flexibility and responsiveness of the lead agency [3]. The organising lead agency seems to be a decisive factor: “Cases were most successful when lead agencies were responsive, demonstrating active commitment to the process and fluid communication with its participants” [5:17]. The lead agency needs a “clear thinking about why you want to consult, with whom and about what” [1:249]. Best practices show that at least three steps are necessary to adapt the participation process to the context. “The first step involves identifying the dominant rationale for participation in a particular case” [5:18]. Here, it is decided on whether there be an instrumental, substantive, or normative process. “The second step involves identifying specific goals that are responsive to the rationale” [5:18]. That means goals, and subsequently success criteria, need to be defined. “The third step is designing a process that meets the goals” [5:18]. This includes answers to questions like: Who should participate, what type of engagement, what kind of influence, what role should the lead agency play, *etc.*?

NEXT STEPS

- Participants of 3rd WP1 & WP2 meeting on February 2 – 4 in Madrid discuss the Interim Report *focussing on (assessment) criteria*.
- Elaboration of PTA toolbox (by the study team) by the Annual Seminar in July 2005:
 - Further refinement of assessment criteria, determine definitive set of criteria and give exact definitions, definition of measurable indicators (quantitative or qualitative) for each criteria
 - More detailed description of selected PTA techniques and their exemplary application
 - Assessing strengths and weaknesses of these PTA techniques using the set of criteria and indicators
 - Drawing up conclusions on both levels of criteria and PTA techniques, compile a list of recommendations for future application of the PTA toolbox
- Demonstration application within WP1 (PTA-2)

REFERENCES: PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER READING (See also [40])

General issues: Stakeholder involvement, framing, evaluation

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