

T16P14 / Citizens and businesses: approaches to engagement in sustainability governance and outcomes

Topic : T16 / Sustainable Development and Policy

Chair : Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Note: This Panel is eligible for the GCPSE (UNDP) Grant.

Public engagement (PE) is a key principle of governance for sustainability, enshrined in many governmentally endorsed documents at international, regional and national level. The concept of the public generally includes both citizens and stakeholders, which are driven by

commercial or non-commercial interests. Numerous academics and international organizations include PE in normative conceptual models of governance for sustainability.

Usually, the underlying hypothesis is that PE can facilitate governance outcomes that are consistent with sustainability objectives ('sustainability outcomes'). Nevertheless, it was noted in the literature that the empirical evidence to back this up is still very limited. One reason is that methodologically it may be hard or impossible to credibly show connections between PE and sustainability outcomes, because engagement often regards individual policy/organizational decisions, while any governance structure consists of numerous decisions at various scales, actor structures, opportunities for policy and actor coordination, and the qualities of such arrangements. In addition, governance outcomes will also depend on the extent and quality of implementation, compliance and enforcement – policy activities where the citizens and stakeholders may be involved in various forms, or not.

When discussing relationships between PE, governance (as analytical unit) and sustainability, a more realistic dependent variable is whether the PE features observed empirically offer citizens and policy stakeholders sufficient opportunities to defend sustainability objectives and the adequate implementation of the sustainability agenda. The first scientific contribution of this panel is that it presents theoretical and empirical research analysing how various features of citizen and stakeholder engagement in policy processes may create opportunities or obstacles towards safeguarding sustainability values and outcomes in policy-making and post-decision activities (policy operationalization/implementation, monitoring, compliance, enforcement and evaluation).

In addition to their role of policy stakeholders and target groups of regulatory and economic policy instruments, businesses can also implement the sustainability agenda by means of voluntary initiatives, including partnerships with social and other economic actors. This panel will also pay attention to these types of roles and responsibilities of businesses, by presenting contributions that examine the engagement of commercial actors towards human development that is safe within the Planetary Boundaries. Theoretical contributions and case-studies will reflect on the ecological effectiveness of initiatives under the Corporate Sustainability Responsibility umbrella and on the interplays between these and various regulatory and enabling policy approaches pursuing sustainability outcomes.

Trade-offs and interactions between the three dominant policy approaches - voluntary, regulatory and enabling – are complex. Some broad patterns of interplays have been mapped in the sustainability and policy literature, particularly on interactions between voluntary

agreements, regulations and environmental effectiveness. However, there is limited understanding of such trade-offs with respect to corporate responsibility initiatives and how they may affect the environmental sustainability performance of businesses. The papers

presented in these panels take a holistic approach, by reflecting on these relationships.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel aims to extend the available knowledge on the relationship between public engagement, governance and sustainability. PE is often considered a key governance principle for sustainability, being assumed to lead to better decisions and superior sustainability outcomes, due to more support for implementation. However, the empirical evidence for these strong hypotheses is limited, while only a few PE

features have been considered so far in case-studies and the few quantitative studies available.

Such relationships may be persuasively demonstrated when the analytical unit is a straightforward policy instrument or project/organizational decision. In contrast, assessments will be methodologically more challenging for more complex analytical units, particularly that of multi-level governance. Governance structures consist of numerous decisions at various scales, actor structures, opportunities for policy and actor coordination, and the qualities of such arrangements. An alternative dependent variable is to focus on whether the PE features observed empirically offer the public sufficient opportunities to defend sustainability objectives, while protecting the public from capture by special interests.

This panel calls for papers that address following research challenges:

- What PE features or methods are more likely to enable/obstruct individual governance decisions of high environmental quality, and what contextual factors and characteristics of the environmental challenge may influence such relationships? Papers are encouraged that address a wide diversity of governance features.
- What PE features or methods can be used in post-design policy processes (such as implementation, monitoring and evaluation) to enhance the prospects for sustainability outcomes for the governance structure of interest?
- How to integrate governance conceptualizations with PE assessment frameworks in ways that enable scholars to investigate empirically and comparatively whether the PE options available for various governance structures (applicable for different economic sectors, or various natural resources or environmental problems) enable the public to defend sustainability values and goals. What methodological approaches can be used to investigate empirically such relationships?

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Session 1 Behavioural and policy perspectives to citizen and stakeholder engagement in governance for sustainability

Thursday, June 29th 13:30 to 15:30 (Block B 3 - 3)

Discussants

Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

Public engagement in governance for sustainability: a two-tier assessment approach and illustrations from New Zealand

Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

Abstract

Public engagement is a recognized principle of governance for sustainability. Yet, the relationships between public engagement and sustainability outcomes are poorly understood. An important step towards understanding sustainability outcomes is to get a sense of whether the legal and policy provisions enable the public (citizens and organized groups) to effectively defend sustainability values and objectives in relation to the design and operation of governance arrangements. This paper proposes a comprehensive evaluation approach to public engagement, based on a two-tier theoretical construct: an analytical framework, enabling qualitative assessments across various governance features; and a conceptual governance model, to help evaluate engagement opportunities holistically, for the (socio-)economic domain or natural resources of interest. A governance model is conceptualized for Protected Areas. The two-tier approach is illustrated to assess whether the engagement options available in New Zealand offer the public sufficient opportunities to safeguard environmental sustainability.

Keywords: public engagement; governance; sustainability; protected areas; assessment.

The culture of public engagement: Harnessing diverse perspectives on sustainability for robust climate policy governance in NZ

Priya Kurian (University of Waikato)

Debashish Munshi (University of Waikato)

Sandra Morrison (University of Waikato)

Despite increasing research on effective public policy on climate change adaptation, there has been little attention paid to the implications for governance and sustainability outcomes of diverse cultural perspectives that shape citizen engagement on climate adaptation action plans. This paper constructs a novel culture-centred framework of public engagement in New Zealand that has the potential to enhance governance for sustainability with specific reference to climate adaptation.

The paper begins with a review of the literature on climate change adaptation policy interventions, followed by an analysis of interviews with key stakeholders. The analysis aims to map the competing perspectives on appropriate policy responses amongst the diverse stakeholders which may help or hinder policy implementation. Identifying the different worldviews, values, and interests – constituting distinct cultural perspectives – on the problem of climate change, provides a platform for exploring a specific culture-centred approach to public engagement on climate adaptation. Such an approach holds significant implications for climate change governance.

Using interviews with representatives of diverse publics, including elected members and bureaucrats of local

councils, members of Māori business, community, and social action bodies, and young entrepreneurs, activists, and students between the ages of 18 and 25, the paper explores what forms of knowledge on climate change and action look like through a cultural lens and how an understanding of cultural values can lead to sustainability-based policy outcomes. The analysis of the different values of the target groups may help or hinder agreement on the development of climate adaptation strategies.

The paper is particularly aligned with the objectives of the panel on 'Public Engagement, Governance and Sustainability' (T16P14) as it seeks to address one of the panel's key research questions: "What public engagement features or methods are more likely to enable/obstruct individual governance decisions of high environmental quality?"

Building trust in participative groups accompanying river restoration projects: a pre-/post observation analysis

Tobias Schulz (Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL)

Susanne Menzel

It is often claimed that complex infrastructure projects, such as nature restoration projects for rivers for example, require new and complementary modes of political decision-making in early stages that are based on participatory modes of deliberation in order to foster mutual trust.

Increased power of participants is generally viewed as leading to superior participation and related social outcomes. However, it has also been showed in more recent research that participants rather appreciate a transparent and well structured, professionally led process that helps them shaping their expectations, taking advantage of their possibilities and being most efficient in the attempt to take influence. It is thus questionable whether formal participation rights alone are sufficient for positive social and subsequent environmental outcomes.

We build our research on five case studies (flood management at different areas along medium-sized rivers in Switzerland) for which we have turned out a standardized survey among the participants of these processes at two points in time (at the beginning of these participatory processes and after one to two years). This allows us to measure the social outcome of participatory processes (e.g. trust in institutions) as well as the characteristics of the process ("margin of negotiation" and "quality of the process") over time. Although we have received around 120 answers from these 5 processes, repeated observations are only available for 26 participants. We thus apply Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) techniques, not exclusively due to the small sample but also to examine the expected configurational relationships between margin of negotiation, process quality and outcome expectations.

Our results suggest that trust in institutions is not only dependent on the margin of negotiation but also on a combination of outcome expectations with different aspects of the quality of the participatory process.

Institutionalizing Corporate Environmental Responsibility for Protected Area businesses: behavioural perspectives on policy settings and implementation

Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

This paper examines the institutionalization of the Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) concept for businesses seldom subjected to this policy approach: tourism concessionaires in Protected Areas. A case-study on New Zealand is used to unpack the policy interplays, political contextual factors, and the possible behavioural responses of businesses subjected to both CER expectations and legally-enforceable instruments. A conceptual framework referred to as 'Persuade-Enable-Constrain' is applied towards this purpose. Gaps are noted in the ability of constraining mechanisms to protect the environment through 'preventive' types of objectives, while good provisions are available for 'management' and 'recovery' objective types. However, the CER strategy has a different focus. It encourages concessionaires to contribute to 'nature enhancement' objectives, through biodiversity conservation gains. Concessionaires are asked to help the Department of Conservation achieve its service delivery responsibilities, while it refocuses operations towards Protected Area commercialization. Pitfalls in strategy design are exposed, indicating that conservation gains may be limited, while policy interactions may undermine the ability of constraining mechanisms to prevent and manage environmental damage. The government appears to ignore the resource/power obstacles encountered by concessionaires. Its implementation plans focus on narrowly-conceived persuasion mechanisms, which fail to recognize major factors demotivating businesses from engaging in, or extending their CER activities.

Keywords: concessions, Corporate Environmental Responsibility, volunteering, Protected Areas, biodiversity, behavioural change.

