



Lessons learned and replicability

J. Ballé, D. Bailly, M. Philippe, K. Fustec,
J. Herry et M. Lample



Interreg
Atlantic Area
European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION

Introduction

When management and science team up

- LESSON 1 Ensure shared leadership between science and management
- LESSON 2 Integrate transdisciplinarity and participatory processes in academic research
- LESSON 3 An opportunity for managers to co-design and explore new ways and perspectives
- LESSON 4 Participatory assessment is a social process
- LESSON 5 Keep in step with the phasing

Stakeholder engagement

- LESSON 6 Ground the assessment in the participation culture of the territory
- LESSON 7 Facilitation requires skills
- LESSON 8 From stance to sharing positive experiences
- LESSON 9 Build a common language
- LESSON 10 Communicate inside and outside the stakeholder forum
- LESSON 11 Celebrate the process

Share knowledge and visions

- LESSON 12 Respect all knowledge
- LESSON 13 Structure knowledge in its key dimensions
- LESSON 14 Consider different cognitive channels
- LESSON 15 Manage data gaps

Co-construct the assessment

- LESSON 16 What do we call an assessment
- LESSON 17 Mind the links
- LESSON 18 Due consideration to the social dimension
- LESSON 19 Walking all the way together
- LESSON 20 Beware of 'ready-made' and of 'Integronsters'
- LESSON 21 Communicating outputs
- LESSON 22 Monitoring outcomes

Introduction

This chapter presents the main lessons learned from fifteen years of participatory assessment practice in different contexts and in relation to different environmental issues. These are a series of assessments initiated within the framework of European research projects. They are constructed as partnerships between science and management with a certain level of stakeholder representation.

These participatory assessments were not initiated in decision-making arenas. They are not considered to be a substitute for democracy or as a consultation process led by politicians. They are designed to produce integrated visions within a group of experts sharing their knowledge, representations, interests and demands.

These assessments are interactive social processes that produce original information of interest to science, management and participating stakeholders. In some cases, the assessment can feed into the policy process. Indeed, the results can be used by decision-makers to

justify or argue their decisions. They can also feed into a public debate or consultation and thus contribute to the exercise of democracy as framed by a political process.

No two experiences are identical; each participatory assessment is conducted in a particular social and environmental context. The quality of the results depends very much on the quality of the interactions between the participants. The objective of the assessment can be very different from one case to another, and it is very important that it is discussed and accepted as the starting point of the process.

Despite this heterogeneity from one experience to another, we have observed strong common characteristics in the conduct of these processes, which should be kept in mind when launching a participatory assessment. Some of these are presented here, not as an exhaustive list, but rather as a contribution to the vast literature on practice-based participatory assessment.





When management and science team up

Participatory assessment is more than scientific or technical advice to management. It is about creating a partnership to better understand an environmental problem while involving stakeholders in the process. Science and management come together from very different perspectives. Researchers strive to produce knowledge in their discipline and must meet academic requirements. Managers seek information to better exercise their competences and are accountable to local decision makers and stakeholders.

The following points are important to consider for a satisfactory collaboration between science and management.

LESSON 1 Ensure shared leadership between science and management

In most cases, the initiative for participatory assessment comes from science, because of increasingly project - and policy-oriented research funding. The risk is that science imposes its own agenda and perspective, making managers feel that they are being instrumentalised.

To avoid this risk, key management authorities should be seen as partners by the scientific community and be involved from the beginning of project development. They should be given leading roles in the structure, management and implementation of the project, to ensure shared leadership between science and management. Similar attention should be given to the role of scientists in the case where participatory assessment is initiated from the environmental management side.



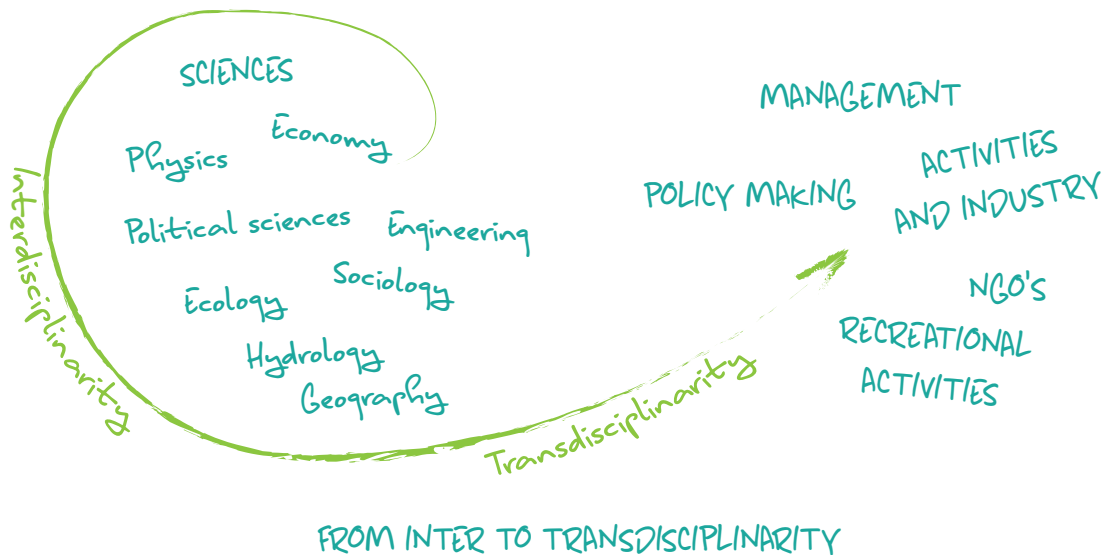
BALANCE PROJECT LEADERSHIP
BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE

LESSON 2 Integrate transdisciplinarity and participatory processes in academic research

From a scientific point of view, participatory assessment requires a high level of interdisciplinarity, i.e. interaction between different scientific disciplines, as well as transdisciplinarity, i.e. interaction with different stakeholders. To address the complex issues of environmental sustainability, the broad continuum of social, economic and natural sciences must find a common language and create interfaces between their respective perspectives and approaches.

To encourage this transdisciplinarity, it is important to ensure that someone in the team has experience or is trained in transdisciplinary methods. However, it is not a question of delegating, no one is instrumentalizing anyone, everyone has his or her role and important place. Moreover, the legitimacy of each person's expertise must be recognised by the others.

Publishing is imperative in any researcher's career, but it is not always easy in the context of stakeholder engagement and transdisciplinary experiences. Thus, scientists need to keep



in mind that they are also accountable to their management partners. Therefore, as well as being accurate about the facts, they must take into account political agendas. What is written must do justice to the positions of the different stakeholders, and scientists must be able to justify any writing. Publishing and co-writing with managers are effective strategies to take into account all points of view, gain legitimacy and thus reduce the risk of social or political blunders. In short, it is important that science and management work together on the outputs of the project.

LESSON 3 An opportunity for managers to co-design and explore new ways and perspectives

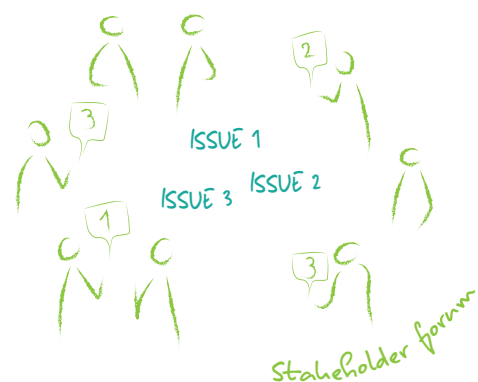
Managers speak and act within political and legal frameworks, within their jurisdiction, and must take into account the political agenda that scientists often ignore. Managers need to share these concerns with scientists to avoid a disconnection that could delegitimise the whole process. Managers must ensure that the assessment comes at the right time to feed into the political process.

Managers are used to dealing with private consultants on whom they can impose their terms of reference or with scientists for advice. Teaming up with science in a participatory

assessment is an opportunity to co-design and explore new paths and perspectives.

LESSON 4 Participatory assessment is a social process

When asked about their satisfaction, parties to participatory assessment refer as much to the process as to the outputs of the assessment. It is a journey that can last between eighteen and thirty months, involving many social interactions between scientists, between scientists and managers and, beyond that, with stakeholders and policy makers.



COLLECTIVELY AGREE ON ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

Agreeing on the issue to be explored and the assessment's objectives is crucial to the overall success of the process. Most dissatisfaction expressed at the end of a participatory assessment is related to unclear definitions of the

issues and objectives in the early stages of the project. Sufficient time needs to be devoted to this initial phase, and facilitation techniques such as 'Triage' or more sophisticated techniques are important for its successful completion. It is also important to identify and invite to the table, from the outset, all the expertise needed to address the issue. This may even involve reframing the issue in the absence of expertise.

A participatory assessment should also be managed as an adaptive social process with room for innovation along the way. The means and the objectives should be open to discussion throughout the assessment, always taking into account the limitation of resources (time and/or knowledge). Each participant should consider that they are in both a 'learning and teaching' position.

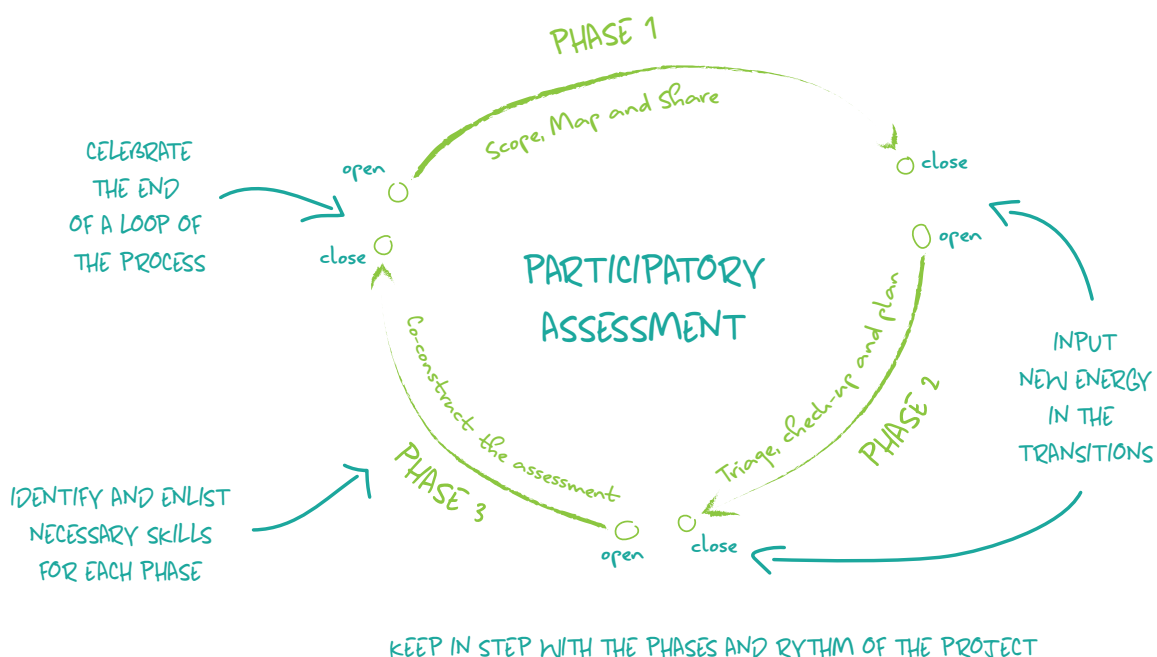
LESSON 5 Keep in step with the phasing

While the process should be adapted to the context, it is essential to phase it and take time over each phase. Particular attention should be paid to the changes of pace and skills needed between the different phases. Each phase

has its own dynamics and risks, which will require specific skills and forms of interaction or distancing. It is also important to mark the transitions between phases, in particular their opening and closing.

For example, the Scope, Map and Share phase involves a lot of brainstorming within the stakeholder forum with little questioning of the feasibility of the assessment or the resources required. It therefore tends to raise high expectations. Entering the next phase of Triage, Check-up and Plan may give a feeling of 'back to earth' but is nonetheless essential for the quality of the assessment. If the Triage exercise or the selection of indicators and representations is not collectively endorsed at this stage, the assessment results may not be legitimated by the contributors and stakeholders. Finally, when entering the Co-construct Assessment phase, science and management tend to retreat into their fields of expertise and construct their part of the assessment without continuing the consultation process with the stakeholder forum.

So, bear in mind not to miss a phase, to get lost in one of them or to lose the interaction within the collaborative forum.





Stakeholder engagement

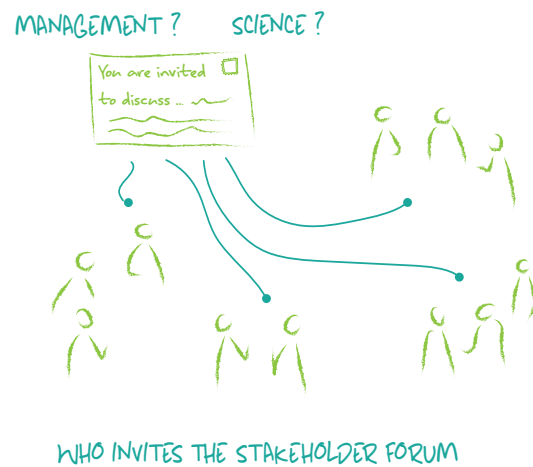
Stakeholder engagement in a participatory assessment is about involving a limited number of individuals who are invited to speak on behalf of different social interest groups. There are many ways to involve stakeholders at different stages of the assessment. One is the forum in which managers, scientists and stakeholders share their views on the 'issue' to be assessed and all contribute to the completion of the assessment.

The objective is not so much to create a consensus, but rather to understand each other's arguments and share the logic of reasoning. If there are postures, let the reasons for these postures be made explicit and thus transform the role playing into a real exchange.

LESSON 6 Ground the assessment in the participation culture of the territory

Stakeholder engagement has become a common feature of policy planning and implementation and can take many different forms, from lobbying to public enquiry or participatory democracy. Each sector has its 'culture of engagement', based on memories of more or less successful experiences. The same applies to the culture of working in a 'project' format or conducting an assessment as part of a regular policy cycle. All these elements must be considered when designing a participatory assessment, which must be positioned according to the experience of local actors.

There may be an existing forum or an actor who is more legitimate to initiate the process. Furthermore, carrying out a participatory assessment can create the conditions for local actors to develop new relationships and new ways of working together.



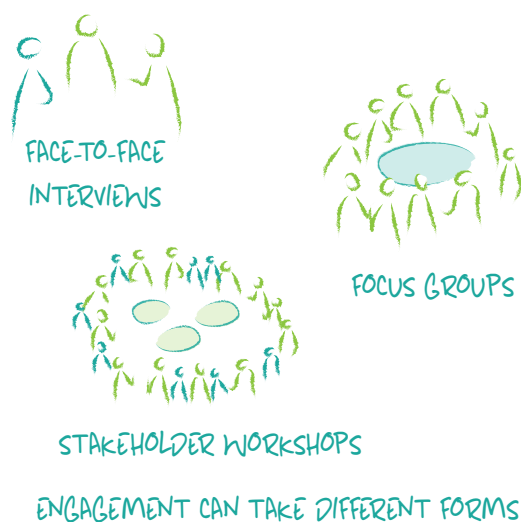
LESSON 7 Facilitation requires skills

Facilitation is essential for smooth interactions with stakeholders. Any member of the scientific-management team can act as a facilitator at any stage of the assessment. However, a very common mistake is to assume that social scientists are 'natural' facilitators, even though facilitation is not a social science discipline. Another major risk is that the appointed or self-appointed facilitator uses his or her position to steer the forum towards certain preconceived opinions, either deliberately or unconsciously.

Facilitation requires skills that go far beyond communication or knowledge of the issue being assessed. Unless some members of the core group have developed these skills and are willing to take on this role, the expertise of a professional facilitator is an option to consider. In any case, scientists or managers who claim the role of facilitator should consider training in facilitation techniques.

For stakeholder workshops to be successful in terms of engagement, they need to be prepared in advance, well structured and facilitated. The exchange should be dynamic, using a variety of engagement tools, alternating between large and small group discussions to

ensure everyone's contribution, and maintaining a balance in the speaking time of different participants to avoid dominant tendencies in the debate. Scripting the workshop in advance would thus ensure a real dynamic of exchange. Ideas should be collected using writing tools - drawings, cards, post-its - to keep track of everyone's contributions.



LESSON 8 From stance to sharing positive experiences

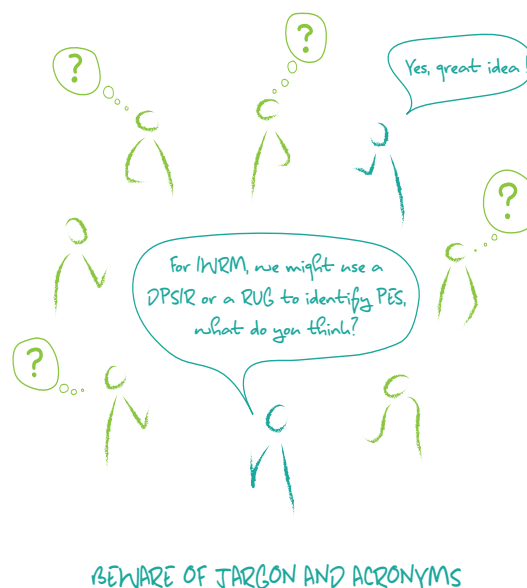
The challenge of successful engagement is for stakeholders to set aside their postures and gain confidence in the forum as a place for non-judgmental sharing. Engagement takes many forms, from face-to-face interviews to focus groups, multi-stakeholder workshops and feedback conferences. Focus groups - bringing together actors with similar interests or activities - or interviews can help stakeholders build confidence, structure the discourse around the issues being discussed and prepare participants for multi-stakeholder meetings. Opportunities for more homogeneous groups to exchange with each other and express their interests in their own words facilitates engagement in multi-stakeholder workshops.

There is a fine balance to be found between the expectation of participants to influence the debate - by creating a space to put

forward their concerns and interests - and the objective of a free and open discussion that encourages new perspectives. Participatory assessment needs to be spatially and temporally decoupled from the formal policy process, while following a clear agenda on when and how the assessment results feed into decision-making.

LESSON 9 Build a common language

A participatory assessment, by its very nature, brings together actors who may have very different backgrounds or experiences of the issues being addressed. Each sector, discipline or group formed around a common theme tends to develop its own 'jargon' of technical terms and acronyms that can sometimes sound like a foreign language. Similarly, a participatory assessment - as in the case of Blue and Green Infrastructure Networks or Ecosystem Services - may deal with concepts that may be totally unfamiliar to some stakeholders or associated with a previously known framework that will give rise to very different interpretations.



Check regularly to ensure that you are understood, as a sign of mutual respect. Facilitators should invite participants to adapt their language if this is not the case.

LESSON 10 Communicate inside and outside the stakeholder forum

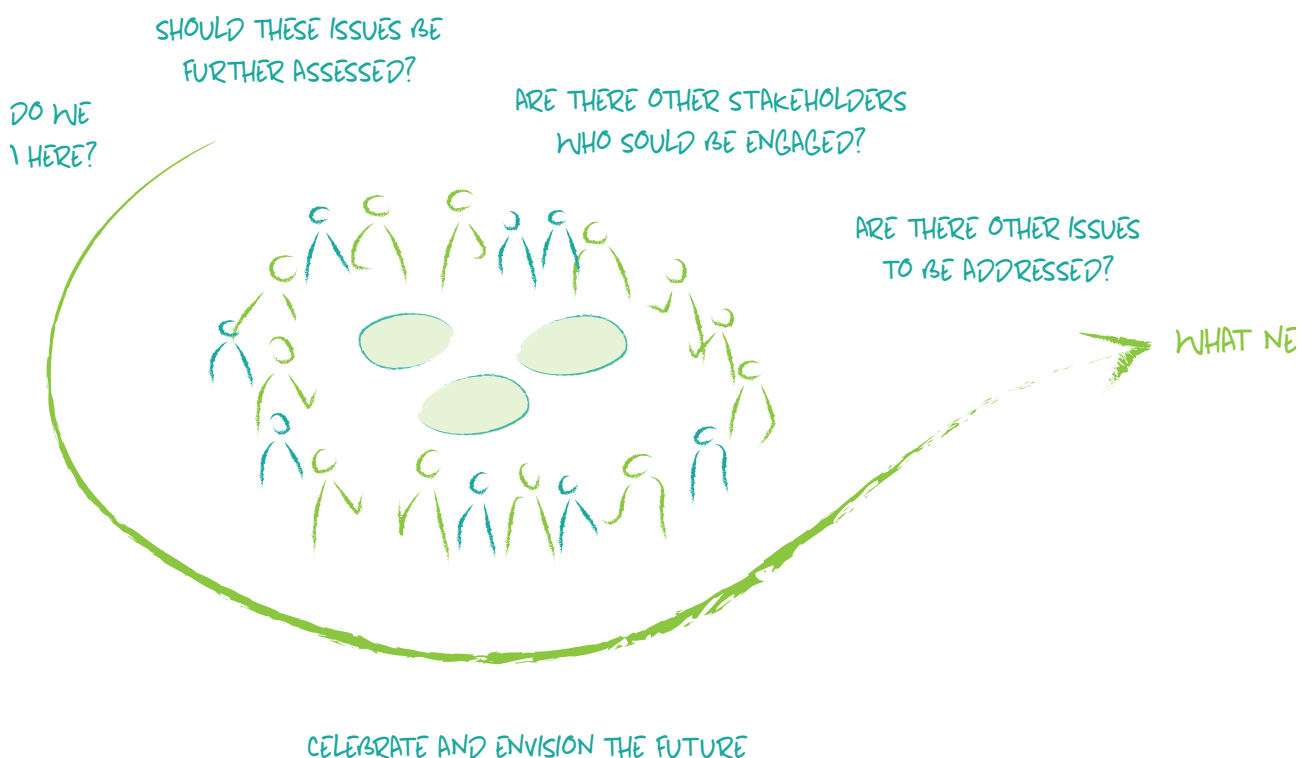
Communication between the core scientific and management team and the stakeholder forum should be maintained throughout the process through regular messages or electronic newsletters. Stakeholders should be kept informed of the progress of the technical aspects of the assessment and how the assessment is reflected in the local context.

In addition to these internal exchanges, communication to the general public through social networks and media helps to strengthen the group dynamic by giving recognition to the commitment of participants within their own constituencies.

LESSON 11 Celebrate the process

At the end of the participatory assessment, it is essential to 'celebrate' with a final workshop that closes this cycle of the process with the stakeholder forum. This workshop should focus more on future perspectives than on an ex-post evaluation: 'Where do we go from here?', 'Should we pursue the same issues?', 'Are there other issues that could be addressed?', 'Are there other stakeholders who should be engaged?'

To further celebrate the engagement process, a local public event can be organized to present the final results and invite discussion through round tables and open debates, allowing the experience and results to be shared more widely.



ÉCART DURABLE

de l'investissement
dans le futur

Quel MSB ?

de l'investissement
dans le futur

CONSUMATION

définir

le fait de

être

consommer
pour l'environnement ?

de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

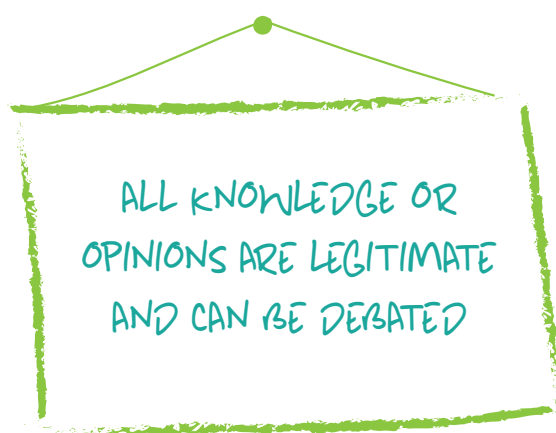
de l'investissement
dans le futur

de l'investissement
dans le futur

Share knowledge and visions

A guiding principle: all knowledge or opinions are legitimate and can be debated.

Everyone must feel free to express their expertise and expect respect from the other participants. The process starts with the opening of the knowledge box and leads to the construction of shared and integrated representations of the socio-environmental issue.



LESSON 12 Respect all knowledge

All knowledge is legitimate and should be considered and respected, avoid the arrogance of scientific knowledge as much as that of field experience. Beware of the illusion of easy expression of knowledge and avoid jargon.

Knowledge takes different forms depending on its nature, origin and the way it is expressed by the social and natural sciences or by managers and stakeholders from different sectors. This includes concepts, reasoning and data formats. Create the conditions for all participants to both express their knowledge and feel legitimate to ask for clarification or even to question the knowledge gathered. Make sure that everyone feels that they have been heard.

LESSON 13 Structure knowledge in its key dimensions

Environmental issues are complex, and the knowledge gathered can be vast and become overwhelming. Focusing on the issue at hand and providing a framework for organising the knowledge as it is exchanged between participants avoids this risk. Many frameworks such as Drivers-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses, Ecosystem Services, Resources-Uses-Governance are commonly used for this purpose.

It is essential to maintain the balance between the different dimensions of the problem and to focus on all key components and interactions of the problem. Not all dimensions, especially the social components, are easy to map or model. Social representations, value systems, power relations or social norms need to be shared to understand the levers or barriers to transformative action and to be included in the assessment.



MAINTAIN THE BALANCE BETWEEN ALL THE DIMENSIONS
EVEN WHEN SOME ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS



BOOKLETS

Scénario "Fil de l'eau"

Le récit

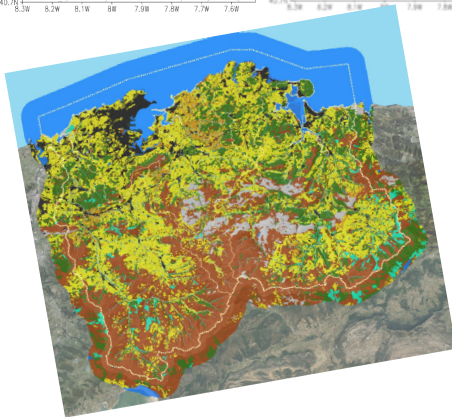
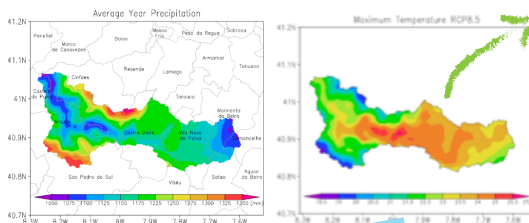
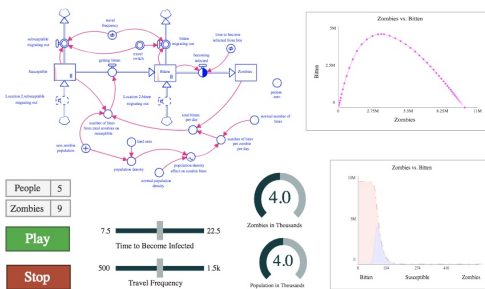
Le développement territorial poursuit les logiques actuelles de concurrence entre territoires et d'urbanisation des zones périurbaines, articulée avec un renforcement de la spécialisation dans une filière laitière intensive. L'identité agricole s'inscrit dans la continuité de la spécialisation dans une filière laitière intensive. L'identité agricole s'inscrit dans la continuité de la spécialisation dans une filière laitière intensive. L'identité agricole s'inscrit dans la continuité de la spécialisation dans une filière laitière intensive.



| | Bocage (Linéaire basé sur Ag) | Surf. Mâts / SAIJ | Surf. Mâts / SAIJ (Km²) |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2018 | 8915 | 41.2% | 412 |
| Fil de l'eau | 7298 | 35.8% | 550 |

NARRATIVES

PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT OUTPUTS

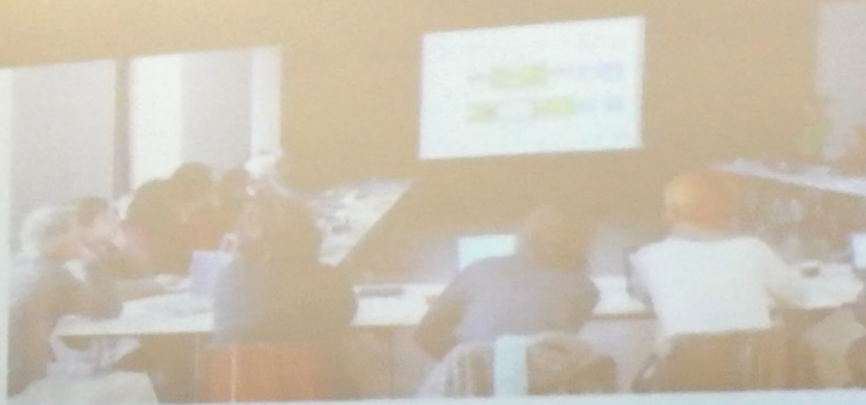


MAPS AND GRAPHS



CARTOONS

USE DIFFERENT COGNITIVE CHANNELS FOR THE ASSESSMENT OUTPUTS



Aim of the workshop

Make a synthesis between managers, scientists and stakeholders of the scenario building process, methods used, usefulness for management, difficulties encountered, lessons learned, links with ecosystem services assessment.

Faire l
et ac
des
mises
ensei
et



Co-construct the assessment

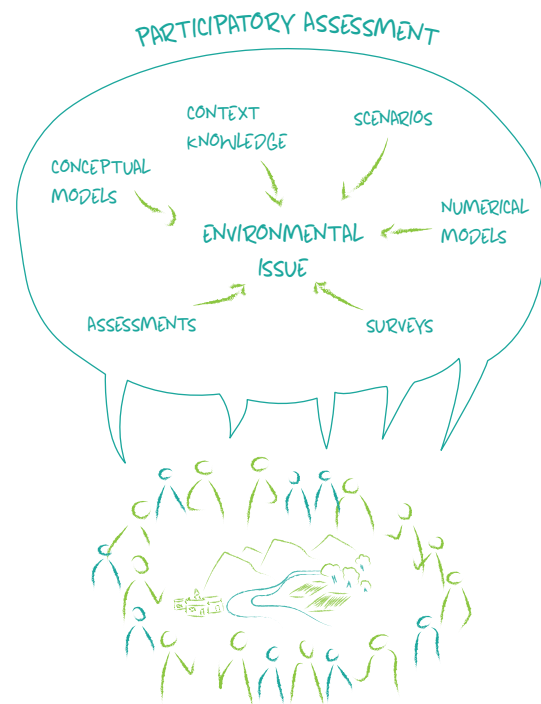
Assessment, as a product, is the integration of all information and representations to communicate a common vision. This vision is not necessarily a consensus, but rather the recognition of key components and interactions, as well as different interests and perspectives on it. The primary objective is to contribute to public debate and decision-making. It must therefore be communicable to many target audiences, accessible by non-specialists, and sufficiently knowledge-based for specialists and legitimised by the managers who have participated in its construction. The objective is not to propose or justify a particular action, but to share a diagnosis and alternatives for a particular environmental policy issue.

In this highly technical integration phase, care must be taken to maintain interaction with the stakeholder forum to avoid missing someone's point of view and reducing the effectiveness of the participatory assessment.

LESSON 16 What do we call an assessment

A participatory assessment is an assembly of descriptive and analytical objects, informed and shared concerning an environmental issue. These objects can be composed of various contents and formats: narratives, models, mental maps, scenarios, graphs, visual representations, etc. This assembly is not a mere collection of all contributions to the knowledge of the system, but a synthetic vision that reflects the conclusions of the participatory process. The objective is to facilitate the understanding of a problem while addressing a certain level of complexity.

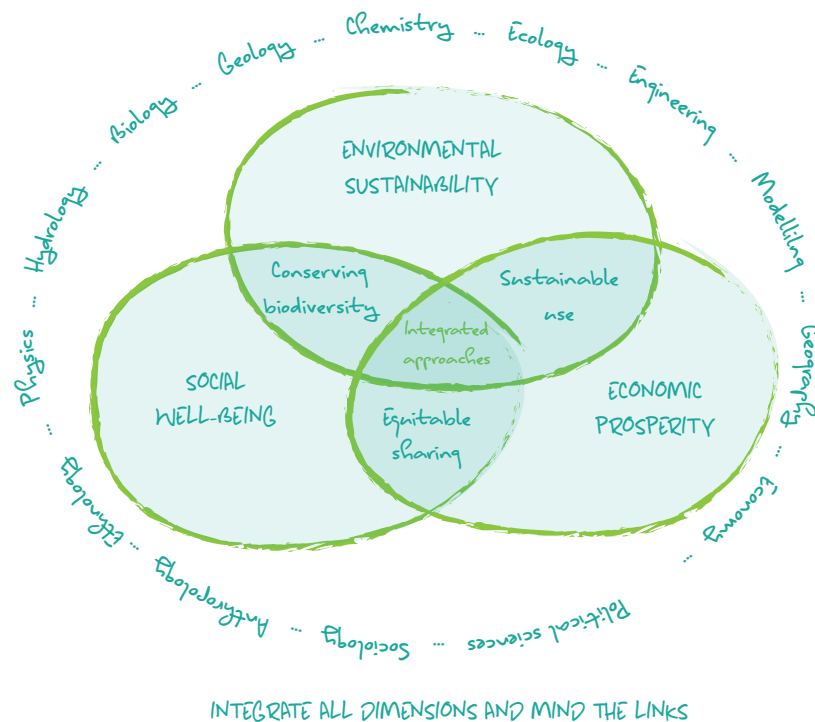
An assessment is an original product that complements territorial management plans, expert consultancy or classical scientific publications.



LESSON 17 Mind the links

The management of environmental issues often comes up against the segmentation of knowledge, hence the importance of identifying the links between the social, economic, ecological and physical dimensions. This segmentation results from the high degree of specialisation in the expertise of scientists and managers, which is essential for the development of knowledge and public action, but which shows its limits in understanding complex systems.

In the same way, conflicts of use result from the confrontation between different interests or representations through interactions with nature. Moreover, each management option considered has a different impact on these uses. It is therefore important that the assessment reflects these interdependencies.



LESSON 18 Due consideration to the social dimension

In a stakeholder engagement process, the social process around the assessment is often confused with the assessment of the social aspects of the issue at stake. The integration of social dimensions in an assessment should not be reduced to stakeholder participation or a simple opinion poll.

Natural processes are not easy to understand, but the social aspects are just as complicated, and there is often a significant information deficit in comparison to the bio-physical components. Social aspects involve sociological, political, economic and legal components. Unlike natural processes, they are much more difficult to reduce to numerical and statistical analyses. Social data are mostly qualitative, sometimes with a subjective component that calls for particular forms of treatment in the assessment.

Various problems are also commonly encountered with social and economic information. Sometimes detailed data exist but are not analysed at the scales relevant to the environmental issue.

An environmental issue is first and foremost a social issue and is therefore highly context dependent: political agenda, regulatory conditions, power relations at a given time and place. This requires specific data collection and processing for which resources must be dedicated.

LESSON 19 Walking all the way together

A participatory assessment alternates phases of engagement and technical development. The development of evaluation tools and models is time-consuming, especially if stakeholders are to be involved in the development. At this stage, the natural tendency is for everyone to turn to their own activity and speciality. On the one hand, scientists are absorbed in data collection, model development or scientific analysis. On the other hand, managers and policy makers follow the territorial agenda, which also involves the development of management tools. It is critical at this stage to maintain engagement so that scientific developments remain anchored in

the issues of the territory and to avoid the risk of one partner imposing its technical solution.

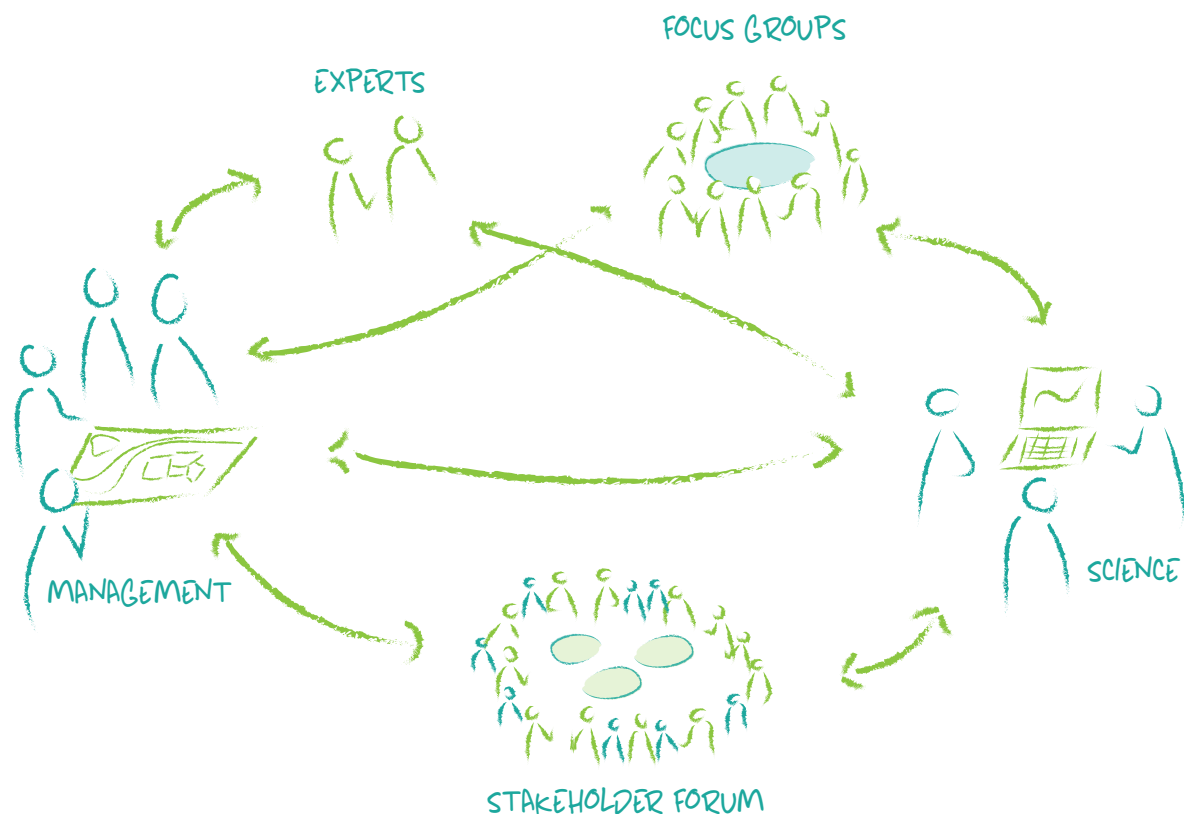
Maintaining a cooperative process throughout has various advantages in terms of ownership, legitimacy and relevance of the assessment. Cooperation is not just about informing or consulting, but about involving managers and stakeholders in the technical development process.

There are many ways to maintain engagement: communication with the stakeholder forum after the 'common culture' workshop, data and knowledge exchange, focus groups, scenario building workshops, model co-construction workshops, etc. The emphasis here is on the fact that the different tools, the models in particular, must integrate the knowledge of stakeholders in their design, parameterisation and scenarios, including the consideration of uncertainties.

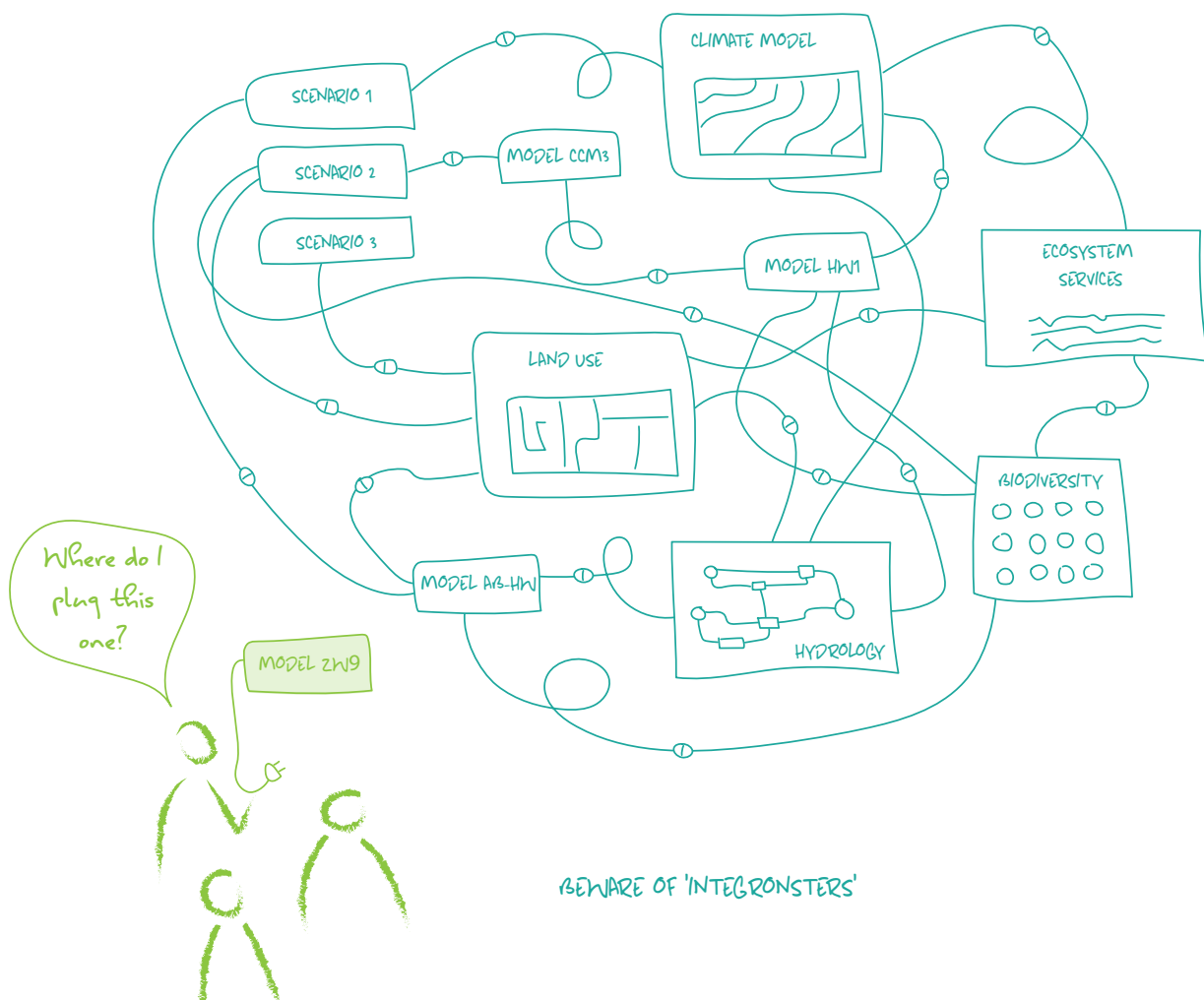
LESSON 20 Beware of 'ready-made' and of 'Integronsters'

The assessment should not be driven by tools (models, assessment frameworks, visualisation) but by the issue at stake and the expectations of participants. It is important to be flexible and innovative while avoiding two recurring pitfalls: 'ready-made' and 'integronsters'.

Ready-made or off-the-shelf tools are those that each of us, whether scientist or manager, uses on a daily basis. The difficulty lies in deciding on a common set of tools rather than working according to one's own habits with disparate sets of modelling, representation or evaluation tools. This can create discomfort and often requires time to learn but there are huge benefits in working on a common set of tools. The readability of the outputs, and for some of them the ease of handling by the stakeholders, must also be a criterion for choice. And it is not necessarily the most complex technology that is the most effective for this set of objectives.



KEEP THE INTERACTION WITH STAKEHOLDERS
DURING THE ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT PHASE



The temptation to build an exhaustive representation of reality and its complexity is another major risk. Focusing on the key elements of the issue (social or environmental components, processes and interactions) and their descriptors at the spatial and temporal scales relevant to the debate or decision is essential. The same applies to the diversity of formats: qualitative data, quantitative data, conceptual models, narratives, optimisation, simulation, multi-criteria analysis, The search for integration through endless coupling of models, these integrating monsters called 'integronsters', or through graphical representations of unreadable systemic interactions must be absolutely avoided.

LESSON 21 Communicating outputs

Outputs are important for two main reasons. First, they should reflect a common construction for the participants. Second, they should be able to communicate the main results to different audiences, depending on the case, decision-makers, experts or the general public. Therefore, the design of the products should be particularly well thought out and adapted to the target audiences: whether it be the vocabulary, the graphic representations, the result indicators, etc. Narratives play an essential role in this communication of results. The strength of the assessment lies in its ability to restore the subjective dimensions to reflect that the word of each person

has been heard and restored after a work of analysis and reflection.

A distinction is made between the need to keep a record of the exercise, which can take the form of reports or large digital resources intended for specialists, and the production of summaries reflecting the quintessence of the co-constructed vision. However, source documents should be referenced in the synthesis documents to enable everyone to have access to the methodology or data.

This strong issue of communicability and co-construction of formats must be discussed very early in the process. For example, the choice of indicators for characterising the scenarios to be communicated may have consequences for the design of models, assessment tools or data collection. The objective is not to produce a single representation format but rather a collection of different perspectives on the issue under consideration to feed everyone's thinking. The uncertainty inherent in different assessment approaches should also be part of the communication of results.



FORMATS OF OUTPUTS SHOULD BE
CO-CONSTRUCTED EARLY IN THE PROCESS
TO FAVOUR COMMUNICABILITY

LESSON 22 Monitoring outcomes

The assessment criterion is not so much the quality of the assessment process as the outcomes. The outcomes are what we want to achieve through participatory assessment and its products. Outcomes may include impacts on awareness raising, public debate or environmental management decision making, depending on the priorities set by the *Triage* process.

However, outcomes are not immediate, they often have medium- or long-term consequences. Although this is not easy to implement, it is interesting for all participants that the results are monitored over time.

One of the expected outcomes is social learning in the engagement process, which is measured in terms of the desire of those engaged to repeat the same type of exercise to go further or address a different issue. At present, most of these time-consuming exercises are carried out at the initiative of researchers. One indicator of success in a territory would be to have generated a demand from either policy makers or managers for further assessments. Interreg is one instrument, among others, that makes it possible to mobilise the level of resources and partnership, between science and management, necessary for this type of exercise.

