

Mutterings, mattering and defining engagement: aligning process and intent in stakeholder engagement

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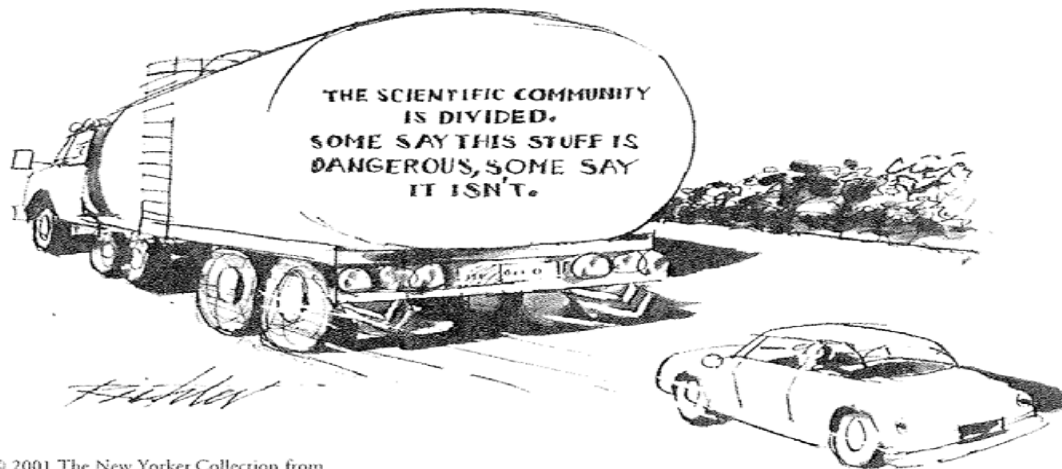


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Mutterings about stakeholders...

- Do *they* really matter?
- What do they know that we don't already know?
- They're only interested in their own issues and can't see the bigger picture.
- The process is messy and can get out of control.
- It takes too much time.

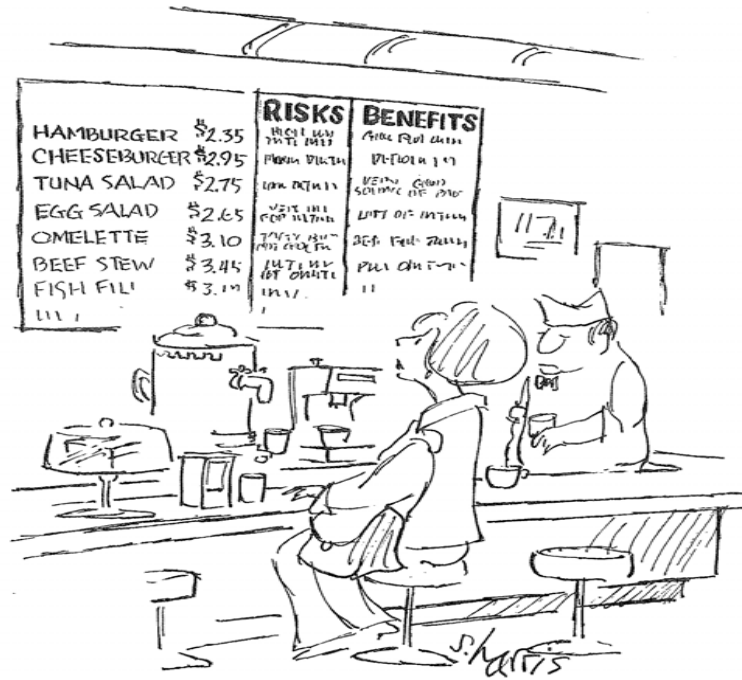
Stakeholders, risk and uncertainty



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Mattering and stakeholders...

- An increasing sense of people living with risk and uncertainty
- increasing levels of distrust/scepticism in public agencies
- increasing societal expectations for participative democracy
- growing awareness of/concern for environmental and social justice
- increased capacity for engagement and heightened media attention



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People want to understand, but they don't necessarily want to make every decision.

Why involve stakeholders

The social and political assumptions:

- right to be involved in decisions that affect them
- right to understand
- increased likelihood of political acceptability of the decision
- greater transparency and accountability of the decision-making process

“All governments need to consider these questions of more effectively tapping community aspirations and enabling deeper community involvement in a range of public policy issues.”

Allen Consulting Group, 1999

The scientific assumptions:

- stakeholders are likely to bring relevant information and knowledge
- the science is often uncertain – we are no longer dealing with hard science and soft values.
- values matter and values underpin the science as much as they do politics.
- science has often proven to be wrong – it cannot replicate the “extreme system complexity” of the natural world.

“When science is involved in the policy process, it is usually not the deep theoretical obscurities that are at stake, but its relation to a real-world situation. (...) Given all the complexities and value commitments in the situation, the ‘science’ cannot realistically or reasonably be expected to be trivially conclusive for the ‘policy’.”

Ravetz, J. 2006

Intentions + interventions

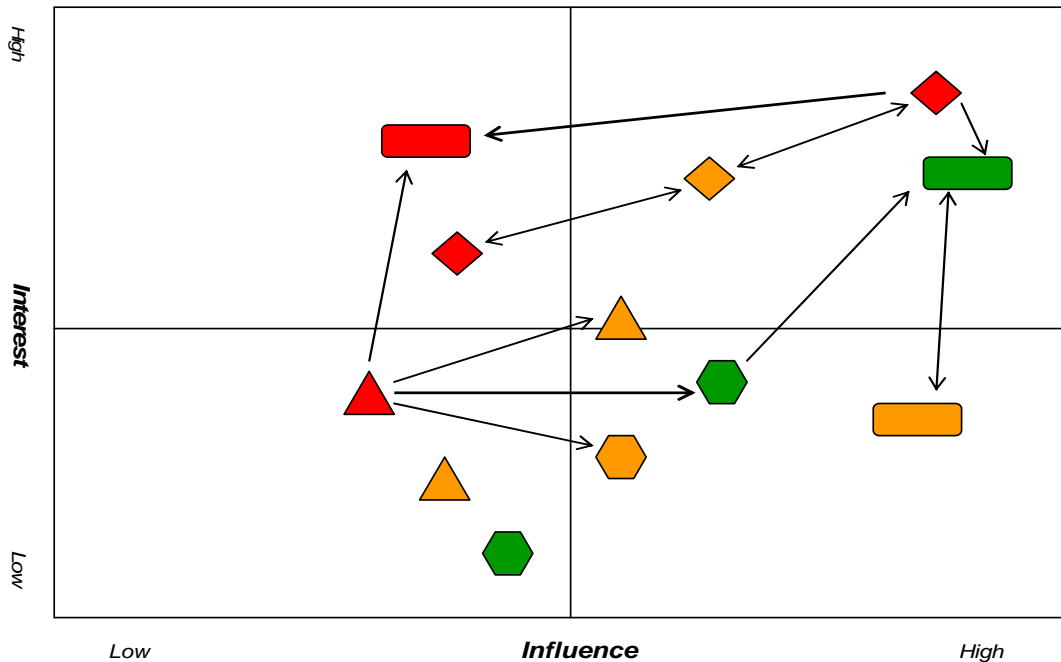
- alignment between intentions and processes needs to be transparent so that methods and analysis are appropriate for framing the discussion...(intentions can range from ‘command and control’ to what we are calling ‘embracing uncertainty’)
- where intentions and interventions are not aligned, dissension (rabble...flare up) will arise and risk management will be around the processes and not around the risks...









Tools for intervention

- The choice of tools and processes will depend on the intention - what level of stakeholder mobilisation or consultation do you want? What level of risk discussion do you want?
- Stakeholder analysis (or mapping) is the first and critical step to any process of stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder mapping

Integrated stakeholder analysis map, showing levels of influence and interest (or stake), type of organisation, attitude to the issue and relationships.



- | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|-----------------------|--|---------------------|
|  | Gov't agencies |  | Internal stakeholders |  | Positive attitude |
|  | Community orgs |  | Suppliers |  | Ambivalent attitude |
| | |  | |  | Negative attitude |

A 'risk governance' approach based on stakeholder involvement

Key assumptions:

- likely to result in a better decision that integrates scientific uncertainty, lay and practical knowledge, social and economic values.
- if people are involved in the decision-making process they are more likely to accept the outcome and to contribute actively to its implementation.
- sets up a transparent framework for shared responsibility for managing the risk.

Some notes of caution

- Genuine engagement remains a profound challenge
- How effective are the processes we use? Are there new processes that might prove to be more effective?
- Are these processes as much about legitimating decisions as they are about genuinely informing those decisions?
- Does the search for alignment and consensus stifle debate and opposition?

More notes of caution

- Stakeholder processes need to be as much about ‘in-reach’ as ‘outreach’ – listening, not just communicating information
- They need to be constantly reflective and self-critical – seeking always to understand what works and what doesn’t and why.

Risk for All Seasons...

- well informed, engaged civic society that is inclusive of scientists, and that understands risk and the parameters within which decisions about risk are made...
- a risk governance approach acknowledges the continuum from risk analysis to risk management - builds on connectivity with and for civil society



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"All I'm saying is now is the time to develop the technology to deflect an asteroid."

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