

ICSS 2010 Session 1:

The EU MATISSE (WP6) project: a catalyst for transformational change?

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Project snapshot

- Matisse: *Methods and tools* for integrated sustainability assessment
- EU FP6: “Global change and ecosystems” priority area
- Duration: April 1, 2005 until March 31, 2008
- 10 Work packages
- Partners: 21 institutions from 10 countries

Project aims and domains

Aims:

To achieve stepwise advances in the science and application of integrated *sustainability assessment* (ISA) of EU policies

Supports longer term and more strategic policy *processes*

Research domains (foci):

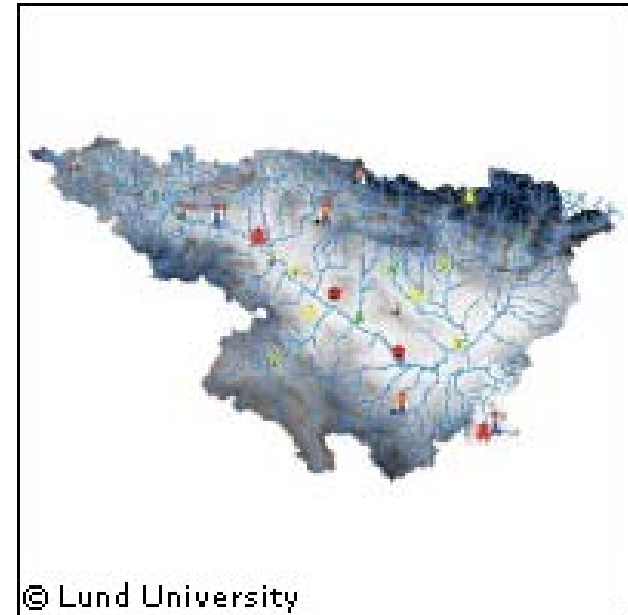
- Agriculture, forests and land use
- Raw materials, waste and dematerialization
- Technological change (hydrogen & national economies)
- Water

Work package 6

Object of focus: Water domain
in the Ebro River basin,
northern Spain.

Research focus: explore a new
approach for understanding
interactions in the water domain

Researchers from 6 institutions representing the
engineering, natural and social sciences



Sustainability challenge(s) addressed:

It depends on the stakeholder you ask...

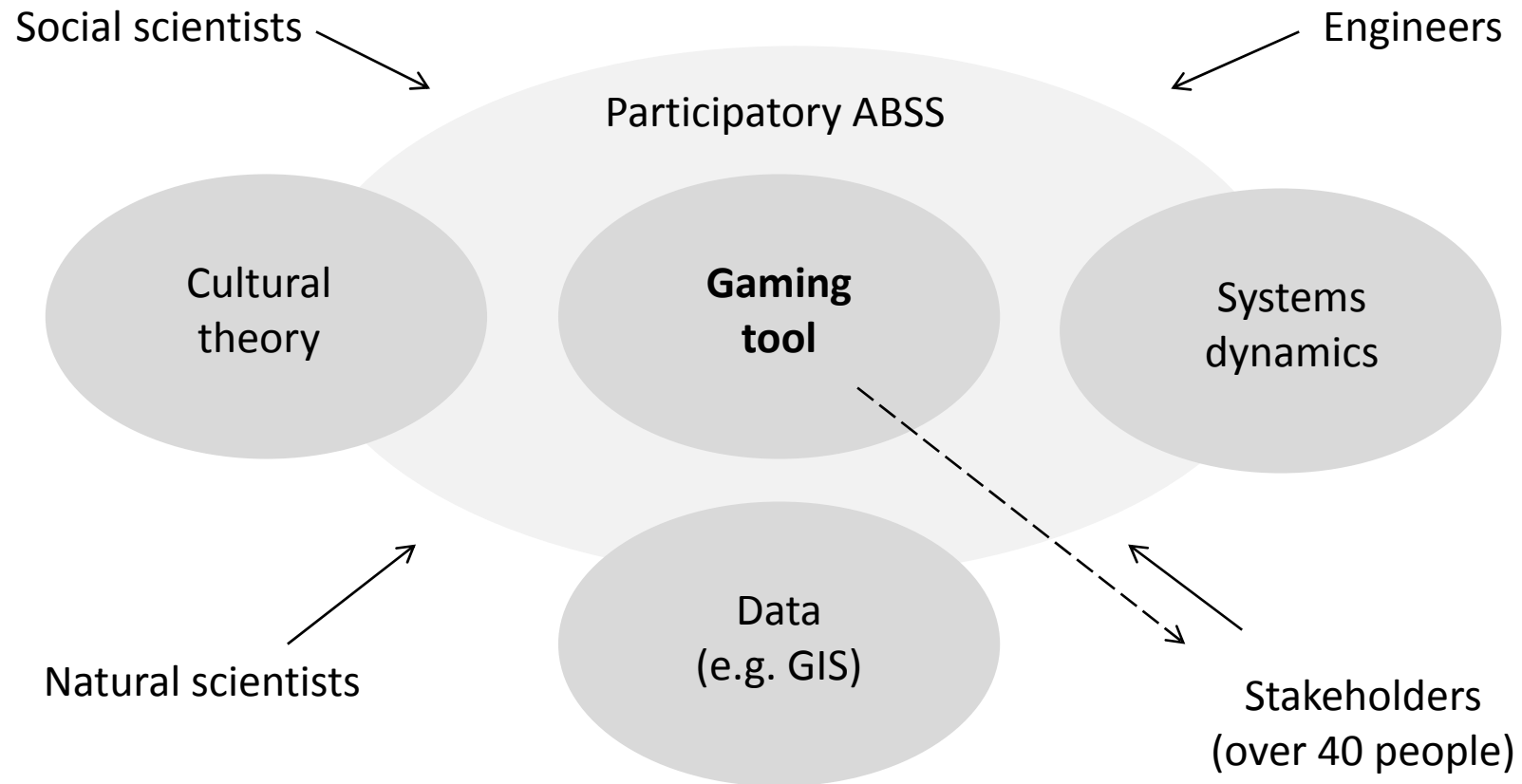
It's of course about:

- Water sufficiency related to multiple/competing uses (e.g. agricultural production & energy transformation)
- Water quality challenges

But it's also about:

- Creating better sustainability assessment tools
- Functional complexity linked to the (basin) system
- Understanding the institutions and organizations that deal with the problems/problem-solving
- Present forms of development(i.e., growth-based paradigm)

the contribution: participatory gaming tool



Results accomplished (deliverables?)

Q: Were the *water-related* problems of the Ebro River basin solved? A: *No*

But the focus was rather on the *process*, and not explicitly on water problem-solving efforts (i.e., the useful insights came at other levels)

Results accomplished

Concentrated instead on

- Tool *creation* that incorporated system dynamics, hydrological data and cultural theory (agent behaviors)
- The facilitation of structured dialog amongst stakeholders, capacity building and reflexive/social learning
 - transition learning** (managing dynamic systems over longer time frames)
 - sustainability learning** (functional complexity, multiple perspectives, outlooks)

In sum: Insights/implications for collective action, leading ultimately to longer term problem-solving

Reflections: process quality

Inclusiveness

Knowledge co-production (engineers and natural and social scientists with stakeholder inputs) through the creation of the gaming tool

Credibility

Late delivery of the gaming tool, messy process

Real world changes from WP6

Occurring at a *higher level*:

- Insights into larger governance processes and collective action (e.g., how assessments are carried out) equating to a better understanding of *regime* and *niche* actors and their power relations.
- Social learning by both stakeholders and researchers (*academic learning*)

Suggestions for improvement

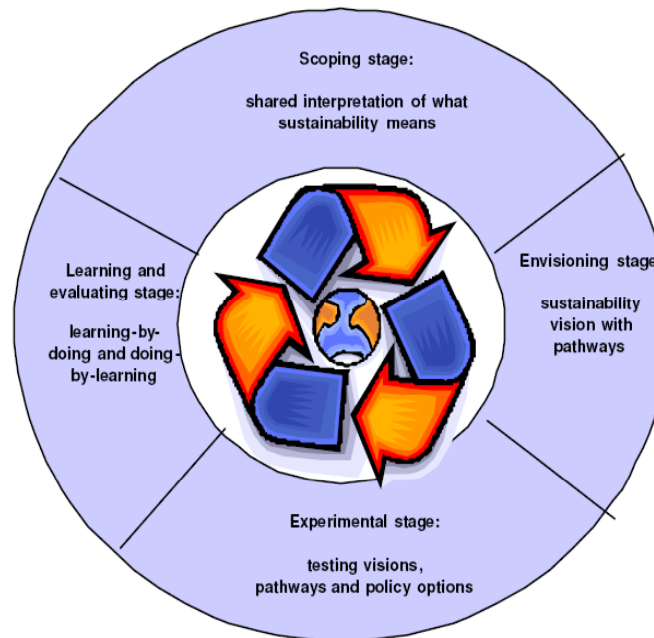
- Research funding agencies (e.g. DG Research) and project partners must be better in boundary-spanning work (i.e. linking the scientific outcomes to problem-solving action)
- Project management must improve as to fulfill all the learning outcomes of the project (and doing it *on time*): equates to more realistic expectations as to what can be accomplished

Final thoughts...

Self-critical (reflexive): *Is this an example of a failed project?*

- Can the problems we are focusing on really be solved in the span of a single research project?
- Challenge/problem areas cannot be tackled in isolation, but areas must be addressed as a subjective, dynamic and interlinked where a long-term and incremental approach is warranted at all relevant levels.

Thank you!



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