Lessons learnt from interacting with stakeholders

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Why am I interested in interacting with stakeholders?

- Reaching out with my results to society
- A way to identify relevant problems to do research on
- As a mean to identify specific research questions with a clear benefit to someone
- A channel to get the data I want
- To get their expert judgements or the values held by stakeholders
- As a method in scientific assessments and produce decision or policy support
- As a way to feel more useful

Possible reasons to interact

Driven

- It is a way to increase quality of my research
- Interaction is rewarding

Forced

- Funders want me to do it
- I need to reach out e.g. to get access to data (but I am not that interested in them telling me what to do)

I ask myself

- Is there anything that I could have done to be better prepared
- How to do stakeholder interaction without compromising science
- How to let stakeholder interaction increase quality of my research
- How can I make the interaction work (be rewarding, stimulating, avoid mistakes, prepare, mitigate conflicts, avoid conflicts,…)
- What does it mean to interact

STAKE I & II – BECC project / action group

- Systematic and science-based stakeholder interaction
- What type of interaction with stakeholders are we talking about?
- Questionnare and focus group interviews with Swedish environmental researchers shows the existence of at least two models for stakeholder interaction
- Both are good in their way
- It is important is to be aware and acknowledge the model you are working with to best manage your interaction

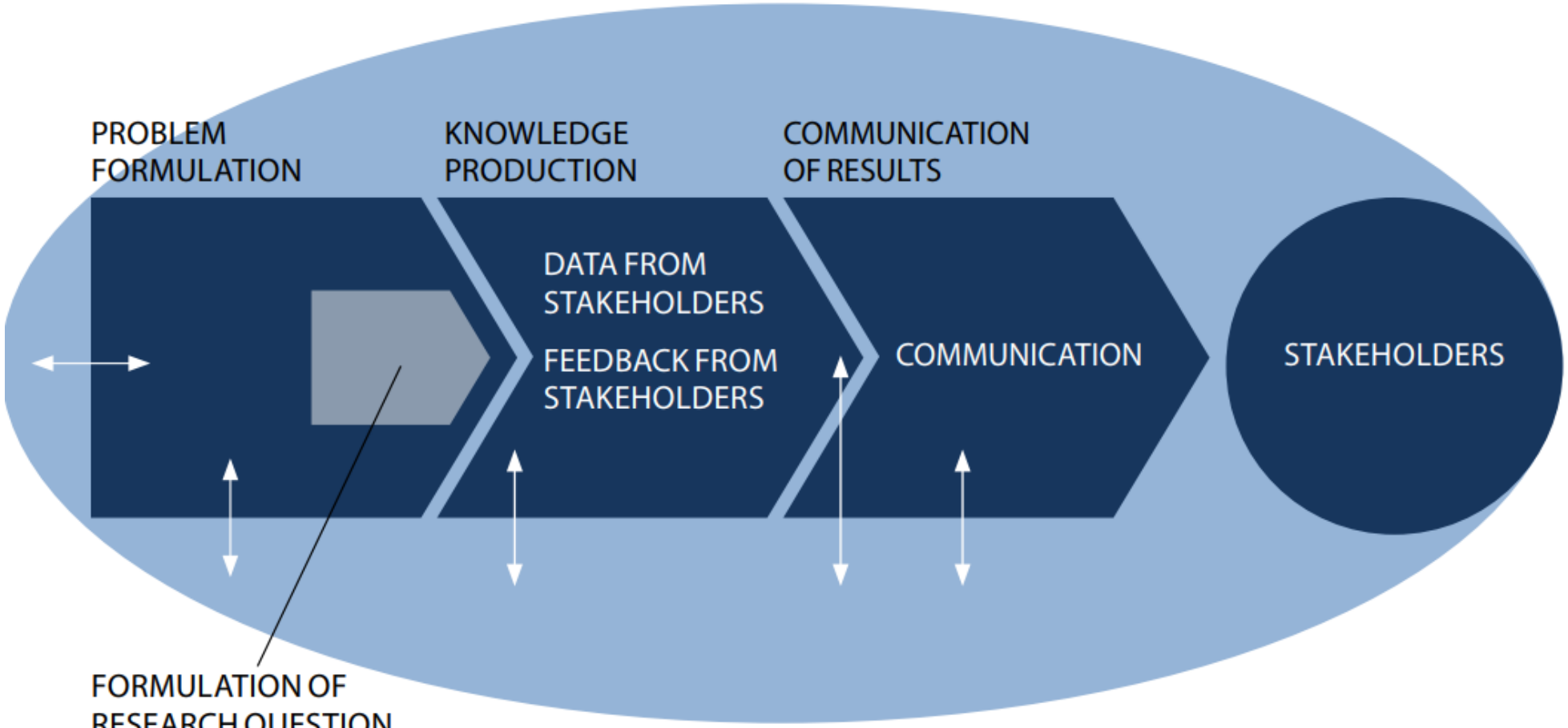
What stakeholder interaction are we talking about?

Figure 1. *The transfer model*

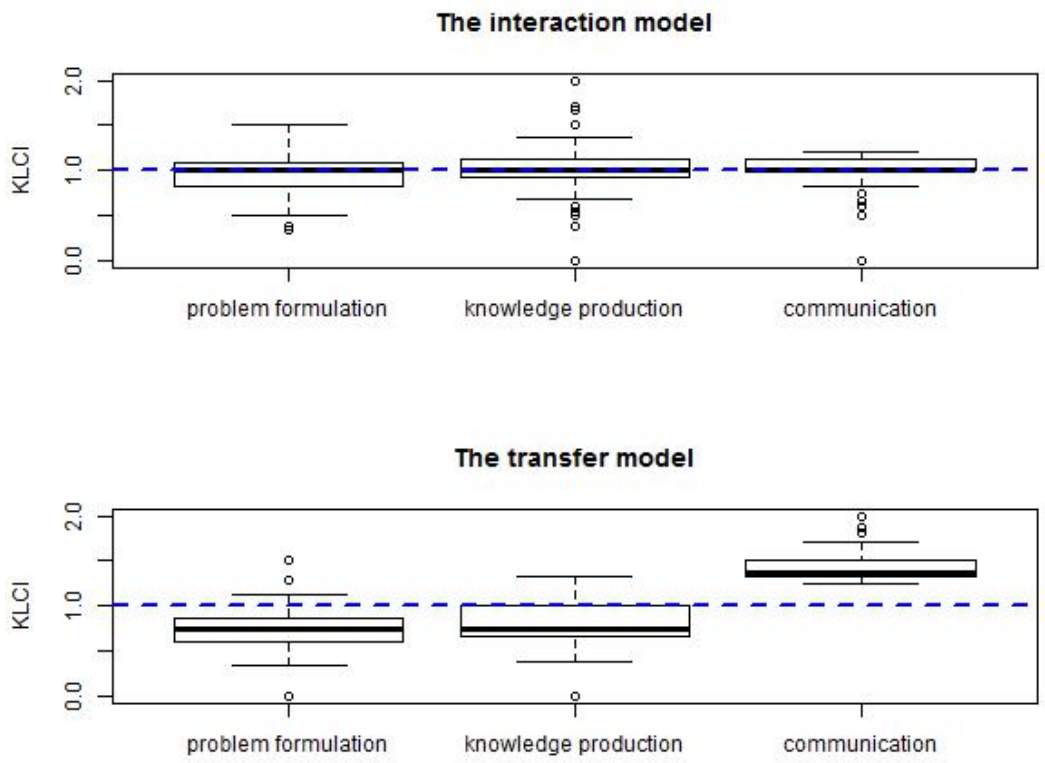
What stakeholder interaction are we talking about?

Figure 2. *The interaction model*

The research process



What stakeholder interaction are we talking about?



- **Interaction:** "There are possibilities with stakeholder interaction and it brings mutual benefits"
- **Transfer:** "There are risks with stakeholder interaction and we need to clearly separate different tasks within the knowledge lifecycle"
- Transfer more associated to the barrier "Lacking time to interact"

Knaggård, Å., A. Ekbom, M. Göthberg, D. Slunge, and U. Sahlin. Researchers' approaches to stakeholders: interaction or transfer of knowledge? To be submitted to AMBIO

Honey bees: bee health, pesticides and pollination

Stakeholders

- European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
- Swedish Board of Agriculture
- County Administrative Boards
- SLU
- Swedish professional beekeping organisation (BF)
- Swedish beekeeping organisation (SBR)
- Pollination network I (Pollinatören)
- Pollination network II (Pollinera Sverige)

Reflections

- Conflict of interest as an independent expert
- Building relations with established researchers
- High reward at EFSA
- Conflict between NGOs
- Varying trust in representatives from NGOs
- Sources for funding of research and commissions
- Innovation project EPI-Agri
- Secondary employment (bisyssla)
- NGOs consumes time and things can happen
- The value of a proper contract

Secondary employment

In principle, secondary employment is any occupation in which you engage temporarily or permanently alongside your employment and which does not concern your private life. Here, employees can find out what rules apply and how to report secondary employment.

All teaching staff members are to complete and submit a secondary employment report, including those who have no such employment.

Invasive species: risk assessment and signal crayfish

Interaction contexts

- Public consultation (remiss) on changes in the law to include invasive species
- Reference group on invasive species - Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Managment (HaV) & Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
- Commission to do a risk analysis of signal crayfish
- Reference group for the new management program for signal crayfish
- New public consultation (remiss) on the management plan

Reflections

- Answer to consultations as a way to make yourself known to stakeholders/decision makers
- Relation to senior experts:
  - Valuable new contacts
  - Am I a resource, a collegue or a competitor
- Already at first meeting:
  - Bad feelings due to existing conflicts between stakeholders
  - Subject to severe suppression techiques
  - I promissed to much
- Later on:
  - Keep the deadline
  - Deal with critical voices
- Media
  - I was to talk about the scientific assessment and not mentions recommendations for management
  - No media strategy
- Lots of ideas for new research with stakeholder relevance
- Access to nice data

Uncertainty in scientific assessments: understand and quantify!

- EFSA is developing an uncertainty guidance
- Critical voices from scientists
- I decided to get into the debate
  - Paper
  - Talks and sessions at conferences
- EFSAs guidance published last week
- Ideas for future research evaluating the uncertainty guidance

New uncertainty approach to make advice 'more transparent and robust'

EFSA has developed a harmonised approach to assessing and taking account of uncertainties in food safety, and animal and plant health. This approach will boost the transparency of the resulting scientific advice and make it more robust for decision-making.

Sahlin, U., and M. C. M. Troffaes. 2017. A note on EFSA's ongoing efforts to increase transparency of uncertainty in scientific opinions. Journal of Risk Research.

Reflection – Why am I interacting

- Honey bees: bee health, pesticides and pollination
  - A need for expertise on modelling, data assimilation and risk assessment
  - Eager NGOs
  - Research, innovation and commissions
- Invasive species: risk assessment and signal crayfish
  - I am on the edge and in the middle of a conflict
  - Great collegues
  - Need for research with direct impact
- Uncertainty in scientific assessments: understand and quantify!
  - A need to scientifically evaluate ongoing changes in policy
  - Stimulating since there is no scientific consensus
  - I am fit to do this :)

- It could be that a systematic and science based approach to stakeholder interaction requires experence from interacting
- The value of sharing experience and knowledge between colleges and from seniors to juniors

Science-based stakeholder dialogues in the context of sustainability science

Why stakeholder dialogues?

1. Identifying socially relevant and scientifically challenging research questions
2. Reality check of research
3. Social research on global change faces limits to scientific reasoning and requires the incorporation of ethical consideration (values)
4. Scientists need to have access to data and knowledge that otherwise would remain unknown or at least very difficult to access

Compares science-based stakeholder dialogues to other types of dialogues

Describes relevant theoretical frameworks

- Rational Actor Paradigm
- Bayesian Learning
- Organisational Learning

Welp, M., A. de la Vega-Leinert, S. Stoll-Kleemann, and C. C. Jaeger. 2006. Science-based stakeholder dialogues: Theories and tools. Global Environmental Change-Human and Policy Dimensions 16:170-181.

Lessons learned while introducing stakeholders to the systematic review

1. Advocate for a systematic review with broad geographical scope and target audience
2. Control stakeholder mission-creep (gradual change in objectives)
3. Establish a mutually beneficial timeline
4. Reduce the potential of biased targeted searches
5. Manage stakeholder expectations

For example, it would make little sense to conduct a SR on the effectiveness of habitat restoration activities at the level of the province or state in North America.

Instead, it may make sense to approach things on an ecoregional scale (traversing multiple jurisdictions or even countries) or even a taxonomic perspective (e.g., salmonids).

Taylor, J. J., T. Rytwinski, J. R. Bennett, and S. J. Cooke. 2017. Lessons for introducing stakeholders to environmental evidence synthesis. Environmental Evidence 6:26.

Learning from research on risk

One possible obstacle is being too isolated to realize that others have faced the same tasks. A second is being too headstrong to admit that help is needed. A third is not having a chance to observe others' learning process. As a result, newcomers may be condemned to repeat it. Few risk communication researchers or practitioners can claim to have gotten it right the first time. If what they tried first made sense to them at the time, it may also tempt others. Although the ensuing mistakes may be intelligent ones, they are still wasteful if they could have been avoided. Moreover, in risk (or other) communication, the damage can be irreversible—if relations with one's communicants are poisoned. A shadow of a doubt can be difficult to erase. Ask industries or politicians who have tried to rescue tarnished reputations.[1]

Table I. Developmental Stages in Risk Management (Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny)

- All we have to do is get the numbers right
- All we have to do is tell them the numbers
- All we have to do is explain what we mean by the numbers
- All we have to do is show them that they've accepted similar risks in the past
- All we have to do is show them that it's a good deal for them
- All we have to do is treat them nice
- All we have to do is make them partners
- All of the above

Fischhoff, B. 1995. Risk perception and communication unplugged – 20 years of process. Risk Analysis **15:137-145.**