

Background to this work

Public decisions regulating environmental issues such as air quality rely on the proper integration of complex scientific evidence. Aware that pressing gaps remain in stakeholders' understanding of the continuing threat on health represented by air pollution, the Aphekom project aims to develop and deliver reliable and actionable information and tools on the health impacts and monetary costs of air pollution, so decision makers can set more effective local and European policies, health professionals can better advise vulnerable groups and individuals can make better-informed decisions. We are reporting here two initiatives on improving the science/policy interface and involving stakeholders in Paris and citizens in Brussels.

Introduction

Policies regulating atmospheric pollution may seem relatively straightforward to conceive from the human health perspective. But in reality, decisions imply the reconciliation of multiple criteria that can often be divergent. Preferences can be influenced by individual, institutional and ideological dimensions of multiple participants which often remain implicit. Since Aarhus convention's enforcement even more, the decision-making processes increasingly involve stakeholder participation and offer possibilities to study both the features of the science – decision interface and the influence of stakeholders. Stakeholders' perception and needs have been the focus of several investigations, but decisive factors are still to be uncovered.

Aphekom work package 7 focuses on sharing knowledge and uncertainties between scientists and stakeholders in an attempt to improve the science/policy interface. Methods and tools are developed and applied to local case studies. A comparison of two examples are presented here:

- A multicriteria assessment of the Air Quality Action Plan of the Paris Metropolitan area using deliberation support tools; this was performed by stakeholders participating to the various working groups. The focus was on compliance to existing standards rather than lowering the standard values and allowed to generate debate around different issues such as environmental inequalities or quality of life.
- The results of a panel of citizens that was organised in Brussels on the improvement of the air quality in the Brussels region. This work was also structured as a multidimensional and long-term strategic vision around 6 major planning issues for an urban region. Each panellist received training and opportunities to develop an opinion, consensus and confrontation was in the last step of an official opinion representative of citizens.

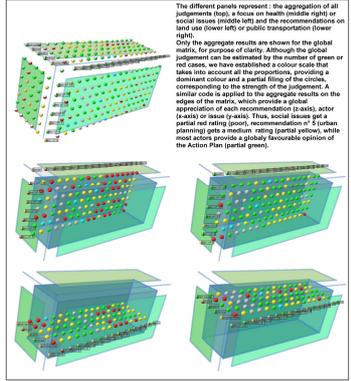
Table 12 Description of the INTEGRAL method and its application to the local case study

| | |
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| STEP 1: Identify the problem | The Regional Air Quality Plan defines the air quality targets for 5 years and sets a list of non-attainment of objectives measures. The problem can be defined in terms of those recommendations included in the Paris participatory assessment that need to be identified, as outlined in the table. |
| STEP 2: Structure the problem | In the French case study, we have identified six recommendations from the European Plan for the City that were aggregated in 3 categories: mobility, energy and urban planning. Stakeholder categories were identified as well as 3 participatory issues. Indicators values for the three dimensions issue evaluations are given in the results section. |
| STEP 3: Represent the problem | In the French case study, we have identified a central number of indicators that represent the performance issue of the recommendations. |
| STEP 4: Evaluate the options | In the French case study, we have selected a choice assessment tool (hereafter, chosen) that is suitable within the scope. Choice of indicators was established in a first assessment. Then, the results were used to evaluate the options. |
| STEP 5: Communicate the results | The results of the choice assessment tool were used to inform the various stakeholders. The choice assessment tool was used to inform the various stakeholders. |

Table 3. Example of an assessment table filled by an air-quality management expert

| Recommendations | Health | Environment | Economic | Energy | Feasibility |
|--|--------|-------------|----------|--------|-------------|
| Recommendation 1: Reduce Road Traffic | High | High | Low | Low | High |
| Recommendation 2: Increase Public Transport | High | High | Low | Low | High |
| Recommendation 3: Increase Energy Efficiency | Low | High | High | High | Low |
| Recommendation 4: Increase Urban Greenery | High | High | Low | Low | High |
| Recommendation 5: Increase Energy Efficiency | Low | High | High | High | Low |
| Recommendation 6: Increase Urban Greenery | High | High | Low | Low | High |
| Recommendation 7: Increase Energy Efficiency | Low | High | High | High | Low |
| Recommendation 8: Increase Urban Greenery | High | High | Low | Low | High |
| Recommendation 9: Increase Energy Efficiency | Low | High | High | High | Low |
| Recommendation 10: Increase Urban Greenery | High | High | Low | Low | High |

Figure 1. Selected views of the Deliberation Matrix



« I inspire my city... Brussels-Capital Health »

The Brussels initiative has been embedded in the context of the Regional Integrated Air and Climate Action Plan. A panel of citizens was organised from March to June 2006, in three steps:

- Raising awareness and training on challenges, constraints and realities of air quality related to road traffic
- Development and empowerment of the citizen's debate facilitated by experts, scientists and stakeholders
- Formulation of a comprehensive "official" set of propositions and specific measures by the participating citizens (see advise on www.mobil2015.isinet.be)

This set of opinions was clustered around 6 major issues: Re-think urban planning, Management of traffic, Impacting economy, Alternative mobility concepts, Information, training and awareness raising and Impacting legislative framework. Some 20 Brussels citizens, from various horizons, were invited to provide their opinion and formulate recommendations to decrease the air pollution related to road traffic. Thus to contribute to a holistic, dynamic and long term strategy. During 6 months, the panellists were taken through successive phases from information to development of a consensual opinion. This work process included meeting with scientists, experts, debates on acceptability of measures and research. The ministers of the environment and mobility have been part of the process. This panel initiative was followed by an open multi stakeholder workshop. The objective was the identification of measures and actions resulting from the dialogue to be taken into account in regional policy drafting. Each measure has been weighted and received a confidence level according to the following criteria: Acceptance by the population, Durability and public Accountability.

Conclusions: In both cases presented here, stakeholders' or citizens' expressions converge quite remarkably towards the necessity to improve air quality through thoroughly analysed policy options such as urban planning, traffic regulation and improved public transportation, providing interesting clues for policy-makers at national or local level. The results of the multicriteria assessment show that despite the consensus that was reached on the strategic recommendations, when they were assessed as scenarios (i.e. in terms of their feasibility) there seemed to be considerable disagreements. This tends to show that stakeholders seem to know what should be done, but they do not consider that the recommendations will be implemented because of a number of different obstacles. The consensus reached by the panel of citizens shows that training, awareness raising and space for dialogue are key aspects to enable citizen's participation in public decision-making processes. That two very different groups of people provide so similar sets of strategic recommendations is in itself a finding that decision-makers should take into account.

References

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