

Prospects for effective civil society involvement in the European follow-up on Rio+20?

Some observations from governance research

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From the “wish-list”:

“Political leaders have to agree on additional measures to improve effective civil society involvement, including legal and institutional frameworks such as the Aarhus Convention and multi-stakeholder fora such as Economic and Social Councils and Sustainable Development Councils.”

(EESC key messages to Rio+20)

Two positive highlights from the Rio+20 outcomes

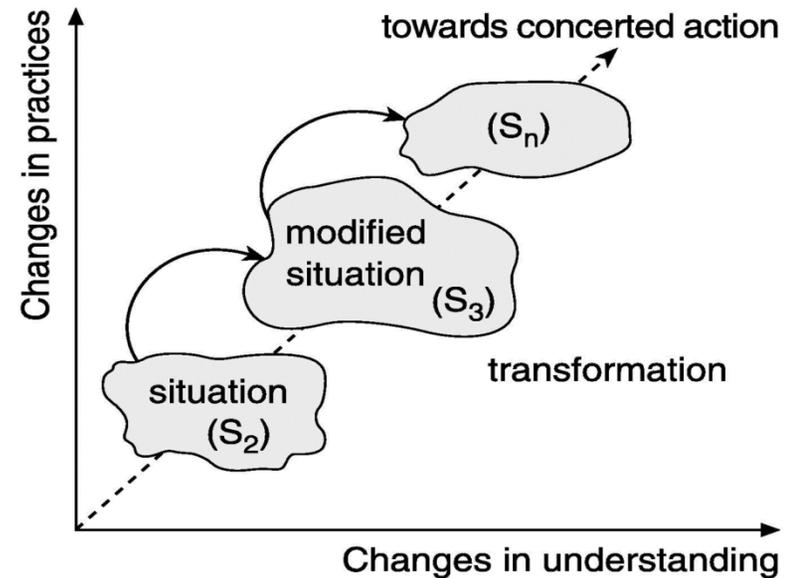
- Strong cross-cutting affirmation of the importance of civil society involvement and participatory governance;
- Launch of process to prepare sustainable development goals through UN working group with strong emphasis on civil society involvement;

Conceptual framing:
*civil society involvement as 'stakeholder
engagement' on intractable governance issues*



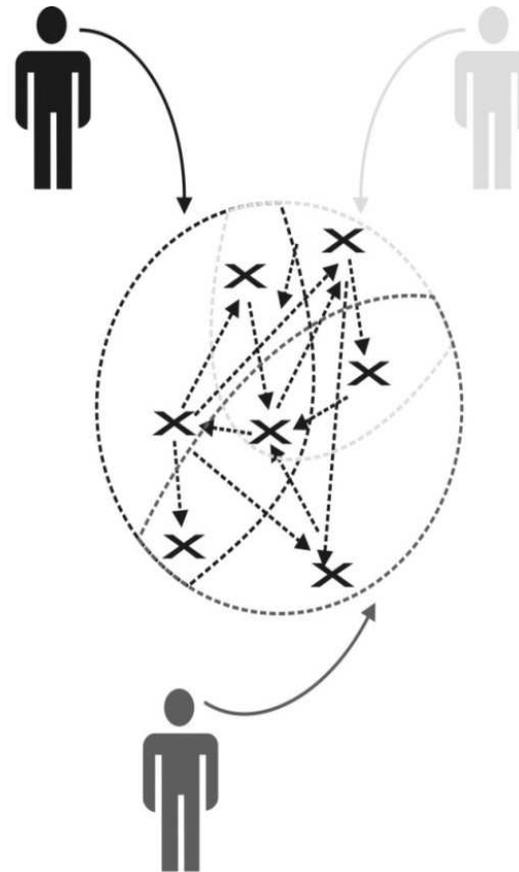
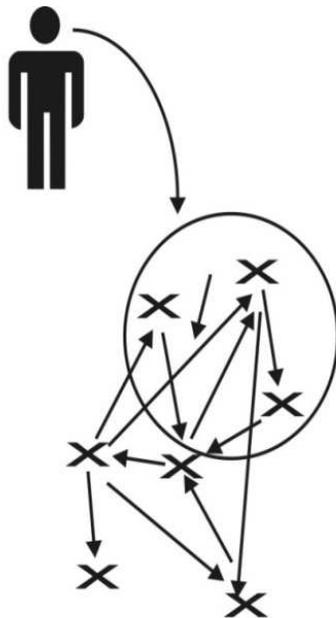
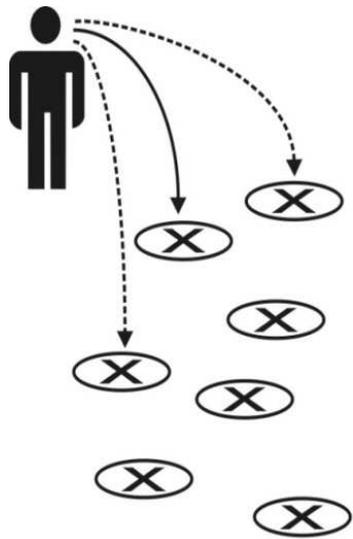
The Boulding Triangle

Source: Boulding, 1970.



Non-coerced change process

Source: Ison et al., 2007



A Reductionist

Examples: Nitrates Directive

B Holistic

Baltic Sea Action Plan

C Interactionist

Water Framework Directive

Source: Powell & Larsen, forthcoming

“[T]he method of democracy – inasfar as it is that of organised intelligence – is to bring ... conflicts [of interest] out into the open where their special claims can be seen and appraised” (John Dewey).

We are *all* stakeholders!

Select key challenges to tackle (lessons from our 20 years since Rio)

- Progress in legal and institutional frameworks but challenges in national and sub-national *implementation*;
- Tendency towards instrumental use of ‘stakeholder involvement’ to legitimize already defined objectives;
- Limited policy coherence and inter-sectoral coordination undermining successful stakeholder engagement

Case 1: EU Water Framework Directive



A tropical landscape featuring a body of water in the middle ground, surrounded by lush greenery and palm trees. The foreground is dominated by the dark silhouettes of palm fronds, creating a frame for the scene. The sky is a pale, overcast blue.

Case 2: EU Renewable Energy Directive

Some questions for the panel debate

- What is the *appropriate level* of civil society involvement?
- How will *adequate resources* be guaranteed for the implementation of institutional frameworks and espoused targets for stakeholder involvement ('funds follow mandates')?
- How will *competent facilitation* be provided to ensure rigour of stakeholder negotiations?
- How will stakeholder negotiated outcomes be *honoured* in formal institutional structures?

Thank you for your attention!

More information

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