



Research Group Environmental Sociology (Milieu en Leefomgeving)

supervising prof.: dr. Ilse Loots
Department of Sociology

Anne Bergmans
Universiteit Antwerpen



Scope of the Research (1)

- Societal-environmental relations
- Policy oriented: problem analysis; policy preparation, planning and evaluation
- Public and stakeholder engagement
 - Added value of participation (for policy makers, concerned citizens, other interested parties): functional (cognitive); instrumental (legitimacy & acceptance); normative
 - When and how to engage the public and stakeholders in decision-making
 - Participatory methods: concept development, process supervision and counselling, process evaluation



Scope of the Research (2)

- Governance
 - Policy organisation
 - Policy networks
 - Policy development: multi-actor, multi-level, multi-sector
- Interaction between science – government - society
- Risk perception and risk communication
 - D-M on complex and technology driven issues
 - Dealing with uncertainty
 - Risk dialogue and *'social learning'*
- Policy evaluation (Prof. P. Leroy)



Method

- Mainly qualitative research
- Action-research
 - Close collaboration with 'commissioner'
 - Interactive and participatory research design
 - Solution oriented (theory as a means to a practical end)
 - Custom made approach
 - Mutual learning
- Interdisciplinary research
 - E.g. Flemish Centres of excellence (**Environmental Sciences**, Environment and Health)
 - E.g. Integrated water management



Relevant Research for this Workshop (1)

- Development and follow up of partnership approach for siting LILW repository (Belgium)
 - Develop and adapt methodology
 - Process evaluation
 - Possibilities and limits of 'interactive decision-making': structural conditions, context related factors, ...
 - Boundary between consultation and participation
 - How to achieve meaningful communication between experts and lay-people ?
 - Potential for 'co-production' and 'co-design' ?
 - What constitutes acceptance ? Can the notion of informed consent be applied to a collective ? When is it acquired ?



Relevant Research for this Workshop (2)

- CARL - A social science research project into the effects of stakeholder involvement on decision-making in radioactive waste management
 - To what extent does the term governance apply ?
 - What type of networks can be identified ?
 - When does an actor become a stakeholder ?
 - Particularities of a stakeholder identity ?
 - What characterises a 'nuclear community' ?
 - How do technical and social aspects of RWM relate to each other, how do they interact ?
 - ...



Relevant Research for this Workshop (3)

- *Dispositifs institutionnels et perception sociale de l'expertise*
 - mechanisms for establishing expertise
 - differences between affected groups and 'interest groups'
 - differences in governing 'traditional risks' and 'modern risks'
 - manifestations of "citizen science"
- Scientific support for the Flemish Committee on Integrated Water Management (interdisciplinary project)
 - Exploration of the boundaries between the social and the technical
 - Investigating potential and opportunities for dialogue
 - Advising on workable platforms and procedures for developing and implementing policy



Interests for the future

- Relation between science and society
- Opening up the experts' black box: where can we draw the line between a technical decision and a social (political, financial, ...) decision; when do the 'objective facts' become 'subjective values' ?
- Does "mode 2 science" or "transdisciplinary research" generate a different type of knowledge ? or a different notion of expertise ?
- (How) can the notion of "extended peer communities" be put into practice ?
- ...