

WG 3 Workshop – Citizen Science Strategies in Europe

Date: 6 June 2018

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Hosts: University of Geneva

Co-organisers: Claudia Göbel, Sven Schade, Marina Manzoni, Katrin Vohland

Welcome and introduction (Sven Schade)

After welcoming the participants, we spend a few minutes to present the scope and objectives of the COST Action, WG3, and of this particular workshop. Particular attention is given to the aims of the activity on European Citizen Science (CS) strategies - as part of COST WG 3 - and of this particular workshop (which lasted for 75 minutes).

The aims of this WG 3 activity are to:

- Build first time ever inventory and analysis of the development and implementation of national CS Strategies in Europe (in a step-wise approach).
- Derive actions for promoting CS in policy (design, implementation, etc.).
- Foster knowledge exchange between those developing and implementing CS strategies, and other interested members of the COST action.

The aims of this particular workshop were:

- Further reflections on the issues/dimensions to be addressed.
- Thoughts on the most realistic way forward.
- Considerations for extensions of the exercise beyond Europe and the COST countries.

After agreeing on the proposed agenda for the meeting, Sven introduced the scene setter presentation: a talk by Paul Waller who is an international advisor on government & public administration, and University of Bradford. This presentation was essential to the meeting because it put all participants onto the same page in respect to policy development. It thereby provided the context for our deeper reflections on CS Strategies.

Paul Waller – CS as an input to policy development/design. Opportunity and Issues

The talk began with the clarification of fundamental concepts, including:

- Policy, as a political intention to make a change in society, the environment, etc. This notion actually carries the background assumption that government intervenes (into the real world) to make changes. Such interventions follow a whole logic model of how political changes are produced in society: from policy to administrative law to public administration and finally to the actual intervention into real world. This model involves different governmental bodies, i.e. it is too simplistic to only talk about government as one single entity.
- Policies can use different policy instruments. Policy design is the process of creating policy instruments.
- Policy design basically operates on two layers, the design of policy goals and the development of policy means. Both layers exist on various levels of detail, from high levels of abstraction via programming levels that prepare operational use, to the actual measure on the ground.
- CS can potentially contribute to all levels of policy goals (i.e. general aims, more concrete objectives, and specific targets). Considering policy means, possible contributions might be on the ground level (i.e. in the fine tuning of specific policy tools).



Paul stressed that although there are opportunities for CS to make contributions to policy design, we rarely see them materializing. He spend some time to provide hints, why this might be the case. Above all, a policy will affect many people and there may be only a single chance to design the policy in the right way. Therefore scientific inputs to policy must be of good quality.

In the light of this necessity, policy professionals designing the policy instrument are sceptics. They constantly look out for lobbying and biases. There must be trustful relationships between policy professionals and those posing scientific advice - in order to accept the quality of any scientific input to policy. Here, already the label "Citizen Science" does not help. It provokes questions such as "Who are these people, amateurs?".

So what do policy professionals check, in order to determine if CS can input into policy development?

- The first question is: Who are these citizens? Am I dealing with a scientist or a lobbyist?
- Directly followed by: What is the science, methodology, data, experiments, etc.? Here, accountability is especially important (e.g. "Who as a professional is putting their professional reputation on the table to say this is good science? Because I need to know who that is and whether I can trust them.")
- The logical follow-up question is: How are scientific inputs into policy design assessed? (In his slides Paul provided a list of recommended references on this topic.)

Results of process so far (Sven Schade)

After this scene setter, we went back to the history and the future plan behind this particular workshop. Sven presented how this workshop is one step in a process that started November last year with a COST MC meeting in Tartu, Estonia. It was the second dedicated workshop on this topic, after a meeting we had in March 2018 in Lisbon.

Following that meeting in Portugal, we provided the people that registered for our Geneva workshop with a template of questions that we considered using for the required information collection. They were asked to fill in the questions for their respective country and to provide feedback on the template and the suggested overall approach.

Eleven of the registered participants, from eight different countries, provided input and comments on a template that we might want to use for information collection. Sven presented some preliminary findings , such as inconsistencies in information received for the same country, difficulties to answer some of the draft questions, and missing connections to policy design and development (hence Paul's presentation, see above). Out of the replies we derived a set of central inquiries, which were the basis for group discussions (see below).

Work in groups (Claudia Göbel)

As a step back before we started the more interactive part of the workshop, we reflected which different perspectives we have represented in the room – in order to manage expectations and to break into working groups. Under the general topic of WG 3: "Improving the science-society-policy interface" we have launched an empirical study asking "How does CS concept & practice manifest in national & sub-national contexts?". This meeting and the last workshop in Lisbon were two essential steps to move tis work forward. So far, members of the working groups are approaching this question from three main perspectives:

- (1) Policy Analysis: How is CS addressed by policy? And how can/shall we address CS in policy?
- (2) Exchange between practitioners: How to push CS on political agendas?
- (3) Science and Technology Studies: How is CS co-created in different socio-political contexts?

We used this separation for more in-depth discussions in three different groups.



Group 1 Policy Analysis – refining the existing framework and survey

This group concentrated on the approach suggested and to some degree tested so far. They basically reported the following core messages:

- Defining the desired content and establishing the right data collection and analysis process is a chicken and egg problem.
- It is important to move forward iteratively, working with what we have in our hands, i.e. COST tools.
- Be sensitive by asking COST contact points if they could you answer these questions, or if they could identify somebody who can help finding answers.
- Be realistic that for the different countries we will have different pieces of information at different points in time.
- We will reveal more and more knowledge about CS strategies and approaches in countries.
- An overall aim to have something comparable may be utopia, but is a good driver for motivating and carrying on this kind of work!

Group 2 Exchange between practitioners – creating a sub-working group

This group formed around a particular interest of several participants to focus on experience exchange and knowledge sharing between those that actually work on CS strategies. They basically reported the following core messages:

- Leveraging of this work – first we need to find contact points.
- We just realized that there are more national communities of practice/platforms than we thought – we even have a list from a workshop at the ECSA conference (which took place on the three days before this COST WG 3 workshop).
- We could start meeting regularly – what could be an agenda that could motivate people to meet? What could be an interesting outcome from this sub-working group?
- Group should be close to participants, or to citizen scientists with a policy interest. Should it also be open to citizen (i.e. not only citizen scientists) with such interests?

Group 3 Science and Technology Studies – looking for case studies on invisible CS and opposition to top-down strategy development

This group gathered around shared interests in CS that happens unnoticed (for many different reasons), and around questions how the community actually feels and reacts to strategy developments. They basically reported the following core messages:

- Precision medicine is a great example of how standards are made.
- Conservation biology society is another good example of doing public engagement.
- Service design and participatory design can also contribute to policies.
- CS in Education might emerge as a new area of regulating.
- Community labs need to be considered. Here, citizens taking part in “Do it Yourself” (DIY) science.
- “Invisible CS data” is an aspect worth investigating, e.g. in water quality monitoring in the US. Often, the fact that data came from CS is made invisible through aggregation. The resulting facts are only then – once the CS contributions are hidden - considered to be accountable.



Discussion

After the break out groups reported back to all participants, we had the opportunity to debate the most relevant content for our work, acknowledging the interests and viewpoints of all participants. In brief, we argued about the following points:

- Two sub-working groups seem to be emerging: one on supporting exchange between practitioners (Daniel & Kjell volunteer to coordinate this), one on the longitudinal research (Sven & Claudia are already committed to coordinate this).
- The concrete survey design that we foresee needs practical testing with stakeholders. Jessie Oliver offered her expertise.
- Need to refine methodology in respect to sampling. How many people to involve and what can we assume these people to know? There is a challenge building a repository that will contain data and information based on which policy decisions could be made. Are our methods and data robust enough? Is one person per country enough to provide all the information required?
- Suggestion to improve the survey and move forward with it to have something concrete in our hands - on which we can then still improve in subsequent steps.
- Complement survey with more in-depth interviews with people involved in national strategy building to generate complimentary knowledge on processes behind strategy making and richer maps of actors involved, e.g. regarding accounts of who opposes strategies and invisible CS (a central questions remarked in the previous workshop on the topic, in Lisbon, March 2018).
- There could be an STSM to do interviews with people from different countries.
- As an alternative/addition, there could also be an open inventory inviting people to “put themselves on the map”, if they like – then this resource would grow more organically and remain more up to date.
- Clarify what a national strategy is – e.g. German CS strategy vs. US national strategy, federal community of practice frameworks as scaffolding and agencies.
- Think of including the US as a case, too.

Next steps

The workshop concluded with a discussion and agreements about the follow-up actions of the team. In a nutshell we agreed to the following items and timeline:

- Distribution of workshop material to participants [by mid-June 2018]
- Finalization of minutes [by mid-June 2018]
- Formalization of the activities as sub-groups of the COST Action's WG 3, incl. goals, objectives, regular meetings – mostly online [by July 2018]
- Invitation to join the new sub-groups [by July 2018]
- Preparation of the consultation of COST representatives: process and questions [by mid-July 2018]
- Consultation of COST representatives on the way ahead [by July 2018]
- Planning of next steps including on the inputs from COST representatives, and inputs from this workshop [by August 2018]