Public Participation Methods

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The Novi Sad Knowledge Assessment Methodologies FALL SCHOOL
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Agenda today

- About Public Participation
- Public Participation Methods
- Principles to set up a public participation venue

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What is…

Participation [Merriam-Webster OnLine]

Etymology: Latin *participatus,* past participle of *participare,* from *particip-, particeps* participant, from *part-, pars* part + *capere* to take

2 a : to take part <always *participates* in class discussions> **b :** to have a part or share in something

Public [Merriam-Webster OnLine]

Etymology: Middle English *publique,* from Anglo-French, from Latin *publicus;* akin to Latin *populus* people.

2 a : of, relating to, or affecting all the people or the whole area of a nation or state <*public* law> **b :** of or relating to a government **c :** of, relating to, or being in the service of the community or nation

3 a : of or relating to people in general

4 : of or relating to business or community interests as opposed to private affairs

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What is…

- "participation is genuinely feel part of something" *Healthy Living Centre*
- "efforts that people make in order to influence public policy decisions" *G. Stoker, Univ. Manchester*
- "the organised effort to increase control over resources and regulatory institutions on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control" *UN RISD*

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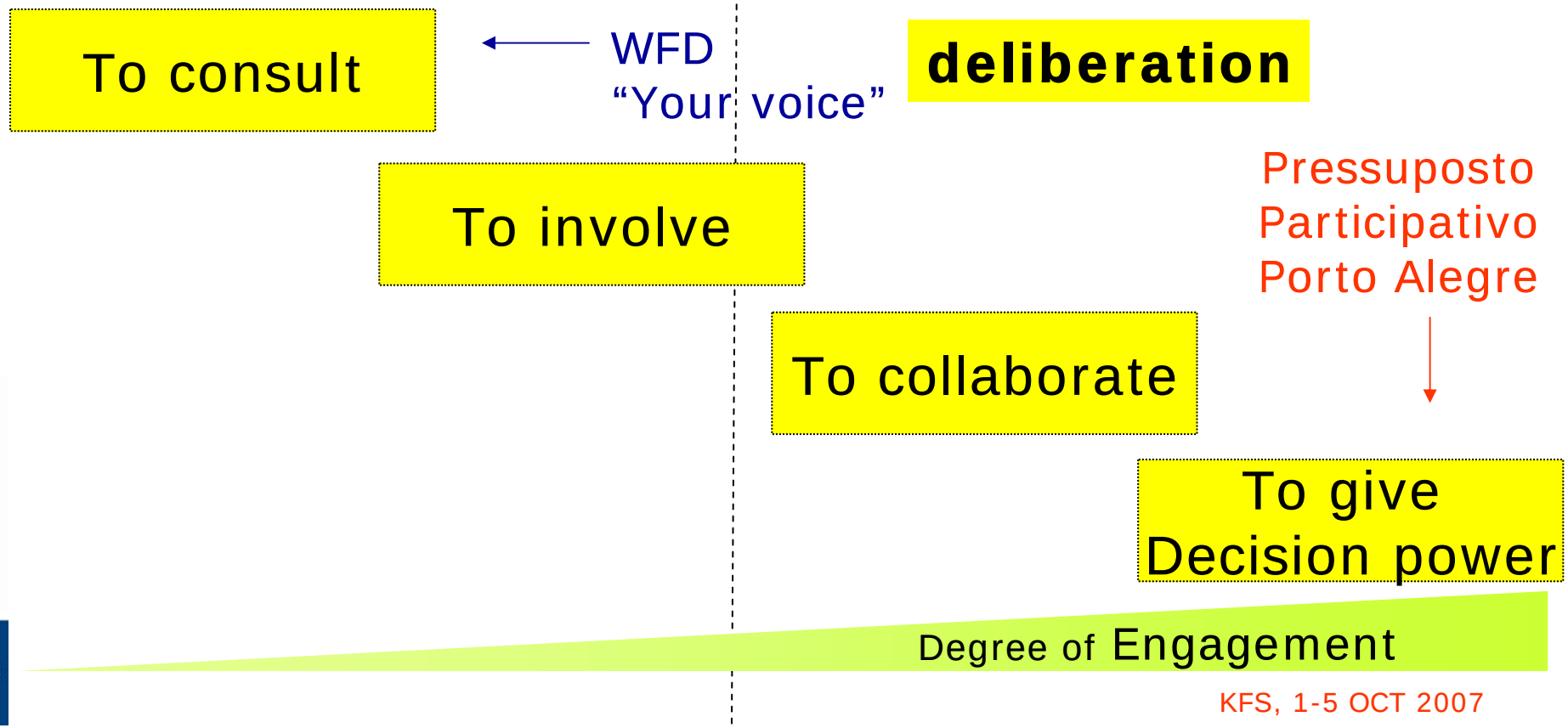
Contexts of Public Participation

There are a myriad of classifications: probably the oldest is due to **Arnstein** published in 1969 based on degree of engagement



Public Access to Information

"A sudden silence hit the earth. If anything it was worse than the noise. For a while nothing happened. (…) Then there was a slight whisper, a sudden spacious whisper of open ambient sound. (…) 'People of Earth, your attention please', a voice said. (…) 'This is the Prostetnic Vogon Jetz of the Galactic Hyperspace Planning Council,' the voice continued. 'As you will no doubt be aware, the plans for development of the outlying regions of the Galaxy require the building of a hyperspatial express route through your star system, and regrettably your planet is one of those scheduled for demolition. The process will take slightly less than 2 of your Earth minutes. Thank you!' (…) [And] there's no point in acting all surprised about it. All the planning charts have been on display in your local planning department Alpha Centauri for 50 of your Earth years, so you've had plenty of time to lodge any formal complaint and it's far too late to start making a fuss about it now'" D. Adams

The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy [BBC series extract]

…Does not ensure that the public is informed… nor does it mean that the public is engaged, involved or consulted…

…It cannot be considered as public participation…

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Drivers of change in governance styles

Normative

- **Transparency**
- **Democracy**
- Procedural as well as **distributive justice**
- Social **responsibility**
- Communitarian principles
- Decision **quality**
- Capturing diversity of experience and **knowledge** and values
- Failures in existing approaches

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more accountable and inclusive governance styles reject the concept of a single, omnipotent decision maker and replaces it with a deliberative process regarding specific policy issues

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EC Legislation

Legislative

Ideas of greater transparency and inclusion have been incorporated into legislation. EC Legislation encourages or mandates participation of wider sectors of the society throughout specific legislation

- Directives (Seveso Directive; EIA, WFD (Article 14) and guidance document , Aarhus convention and directive on environmental information, etc.)
- Environmental Action Programme
- EC white paper on governance

We have assisted to an extension of rights: from the right to be informed to the right to participate

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Justifications for Public Participation

Involvement of relevant actors [stakeholders, interest groups, community concerned, the *getroffenen*] into a reflexive process of exchange of knowledge ...

- Enhance the quality of a process by incorporation of different types of knowledge enriching the policy/decision debate
- To tackle issues characterised by conflict and uncertainty that **cannot** depend on formal tech/scientific enquiry alone
- Uncover information and knowledge or ascertain positions of participants
- Empowerment and sharing responsibility to respond to change – creation of partnerships
- Attain a shared ground for concerted action, including deliberation (e.g. attaining consensus) – overcoming jargons, scales, etc. for shared understanding
- To improve the robustness and legitimacy of policies

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Quality assurance by extended peer review:

"reconciliation" of different *knowledges*

Reflexive process through which quality of processes or products are enhanced by integration of different sources of knowledge

Hence:

inclusion of those affected and affecting the issue of concern to supply KNOWLEDGE in order TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING of the problem and POTENTIAL RESPONSES

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Objectives…

Public Participation: Should allow the structuring of participants knowledge, values, etc. into relevant input to the research/evaluation/decision process…

→Public participation is an ORGANISED process ←

[institutional arrangements, identification of relevant actors, setting up of agenda, venue, genuine influence in policy]

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Examples of participatory methods (1)

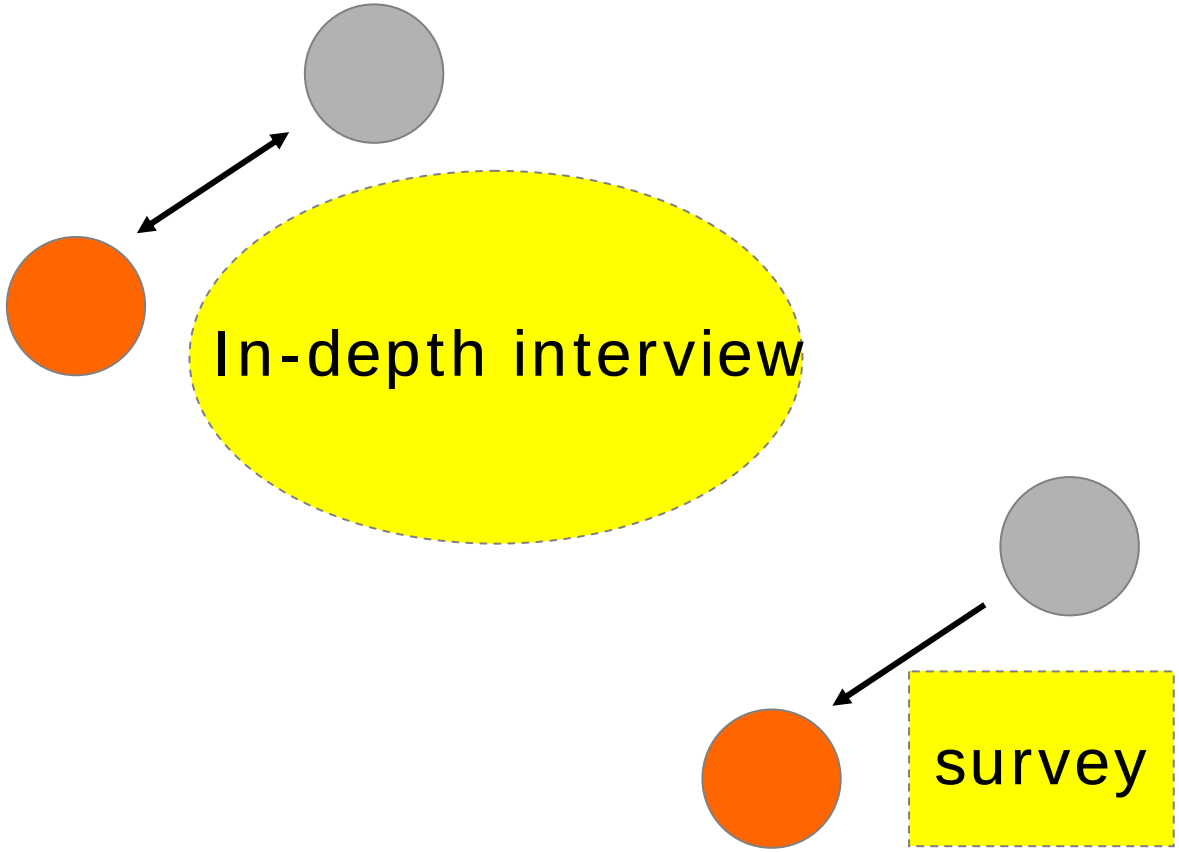
Individual interviews:

In-depth interviews — individual interviews, where the participant is invited to discuss a topic with the interviewer based on a guiding questionnaire.

Surveys/polls — individual interviews based on structured questionnaires; there is not a discussion as such, being just a means of collecting information.

FLAVOURS: Internet based, telephone, mailed, face-to-face… Citizen panels can also be included in this category.

Examples of participatory methods (1)



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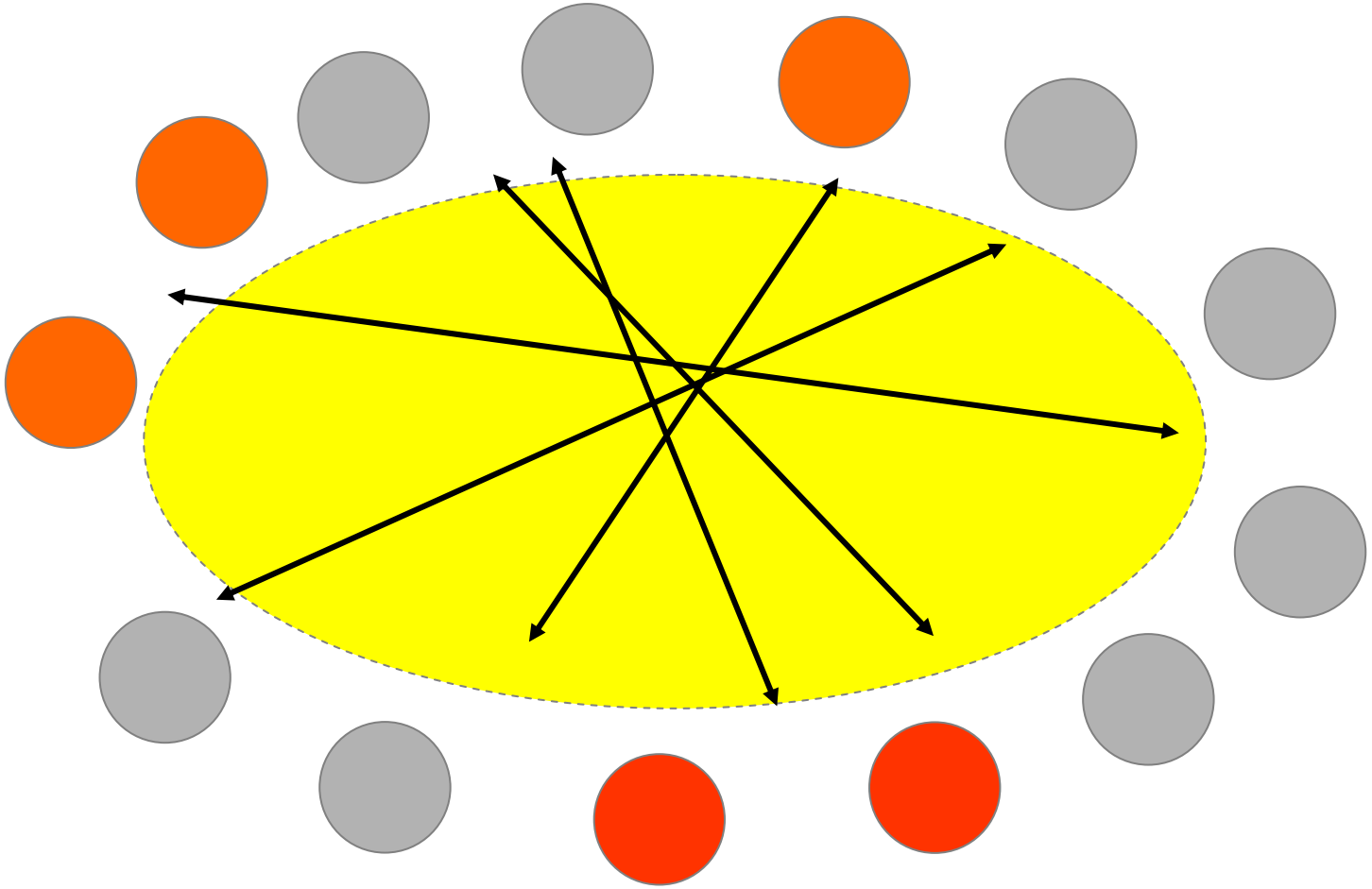
Examples of participatory methods (2)

Group interviews:

Focus Groups — used first for marketing purposes and now highly diffused for research purposes. Are focused efforts to gather information through group discussion. Usually composed of 6 to 12 participants who hold a discussion facilitated by a moderator. It can be seen as a "focused interview" and a "discussion group".

In-depth groups — gives concentrated consideration to a topic under discussion which requires more than one meeting with participants. The outcome should be a joint product in an agreed format, depending on the audience. Also used primarily for research purposes. Requires preparation of information from the moderators side.

Examples of participatory methods (2)



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Examples of participatory methods (2)

Focus Group at work

Visions Project. 1998. © European commission

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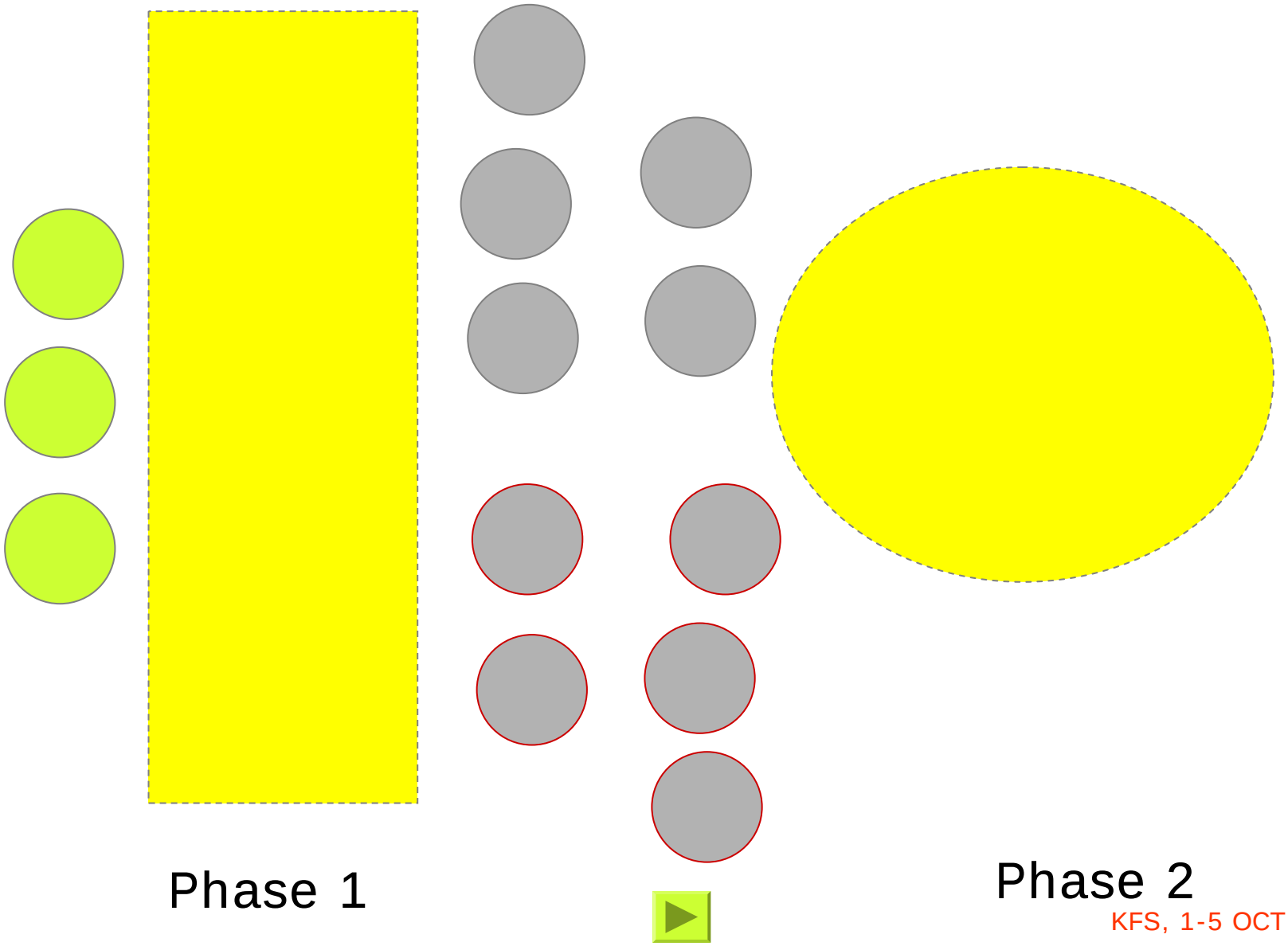
Examples of participatory methods (3)

Deliberative methods:

Citizens' Juries — aims at obtaining informed citizen input into policy options. Citizens are informed by "experts" referred to as "witnesses". Usually meet several days in order to deliberate and produce a decision or recommendations. Outcome is a report that is sent to a decision body. Sponsors may be government agencies, NGO's, etc.

Consensus Conferences — highly structured events involving a great deal of preparatory work with participants before actual conference takes place. Non-scientific audiences confront "experts" with questions concerning the topic (usually a socially controversial one) and then negotiate a consensus statement (concerns, recommendations, etc.)

Examples of participatory methods (3)



Phase 1

Phase 2

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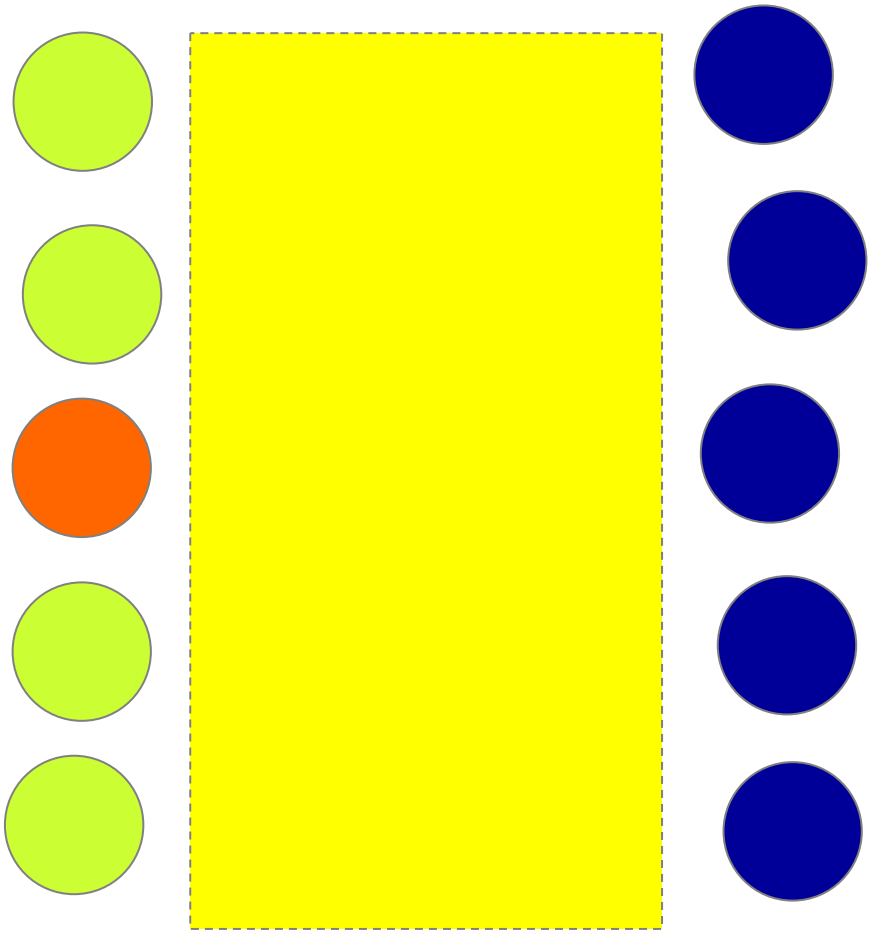
Examples of participatory methods (4)

Consultation methods:

Forums for interest groups — vested interests or stakeholders may be gathered together for meetings or dialogues to obtain insight into the views of people who express an interest in the issue under scrutiny. Meetings can take a variety of forms. Dialogue is conducted among recognised stakeholders rather than among random selected citizens. (citizen panels, public hearings can be put in this category)

Continuous dialogues — intended *users* of a process have the role of co-designers and are a permanent "board" for the issue under scrutiny. Their input is essential to perform the activity (e.g. assessment).

Examples of participatory methods (4)



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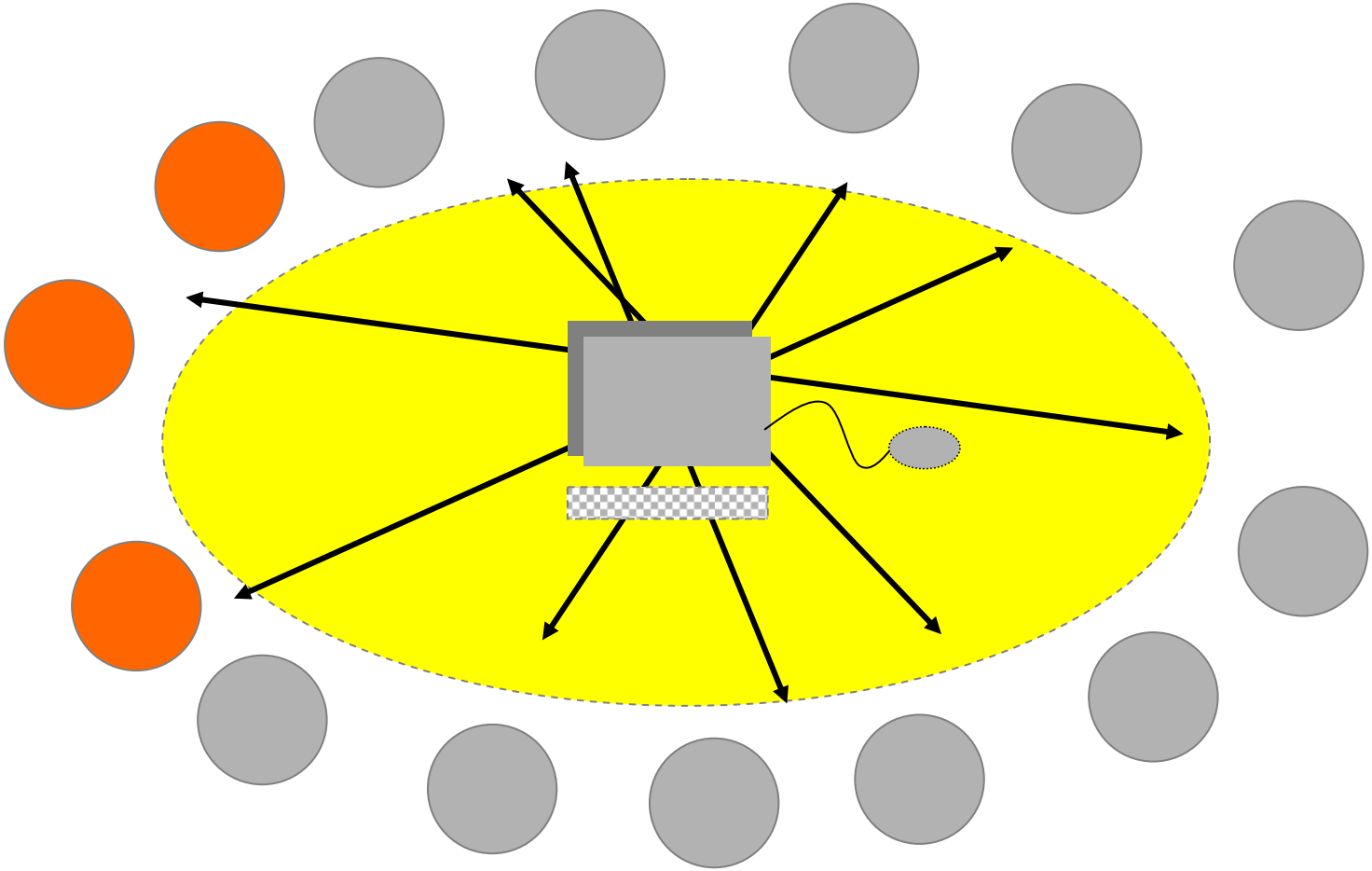
Examples of participatory methods (5)

IT based approaches:

Group discussion *variations:* ICT based participatory research — integration of IT as interface between relevant science and the audience to support group discussions. Used for complex issues. Involves a great deal of preparation of tools.

Participatory Modelling — Involves the construction of models, where variables and links emerge from the discussions, making use of computer techniques.

Examples of participatory methods (5)



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Examples of participatory methods (5)

Climate Change models for PP

Projects: Ulysses and Virtu@lis. © European Commission

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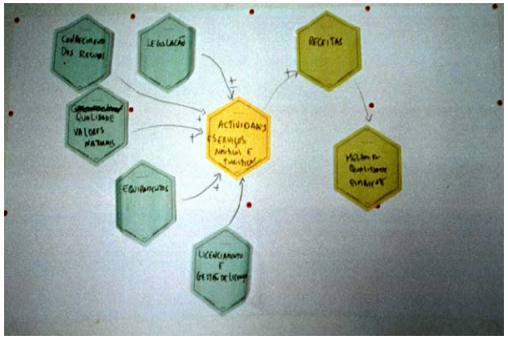
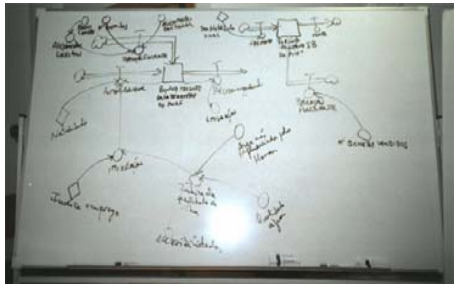
Examples of participatory methods (5)

Participatory Modelling





Projects: Participatory Modelling Ria Formosa. © Nuno Videira

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Examples of participatory methods (6)

Electronic approaches:

INTERNET forums — INTERNET based discussion forums. May be moderated or not. Used mainly for opinion poll.

Electronic Focus Groups — e-focus groups mimic actual ones: http://alba.jrc.it/eFG

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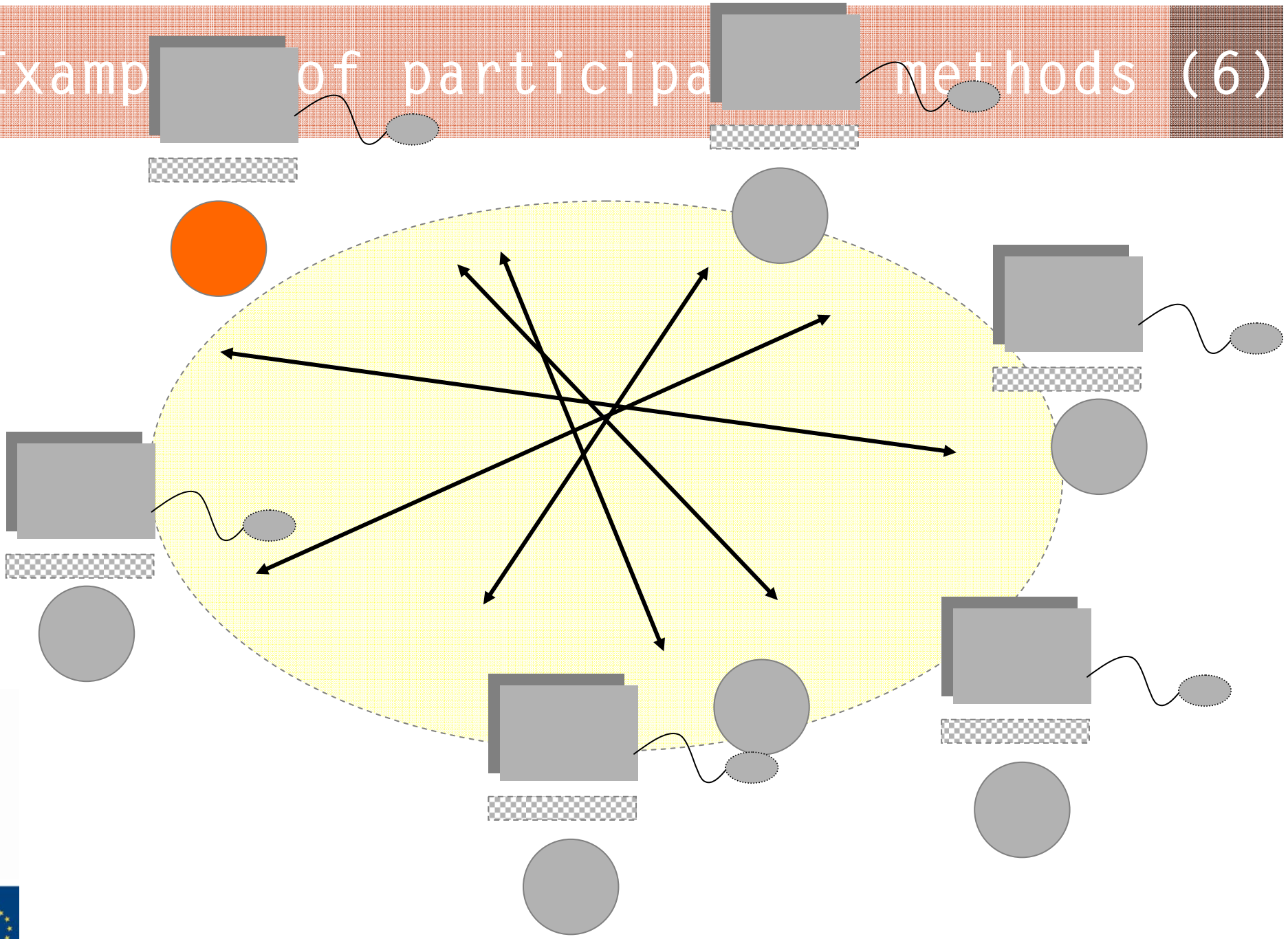
Examples of participatory methods (6)



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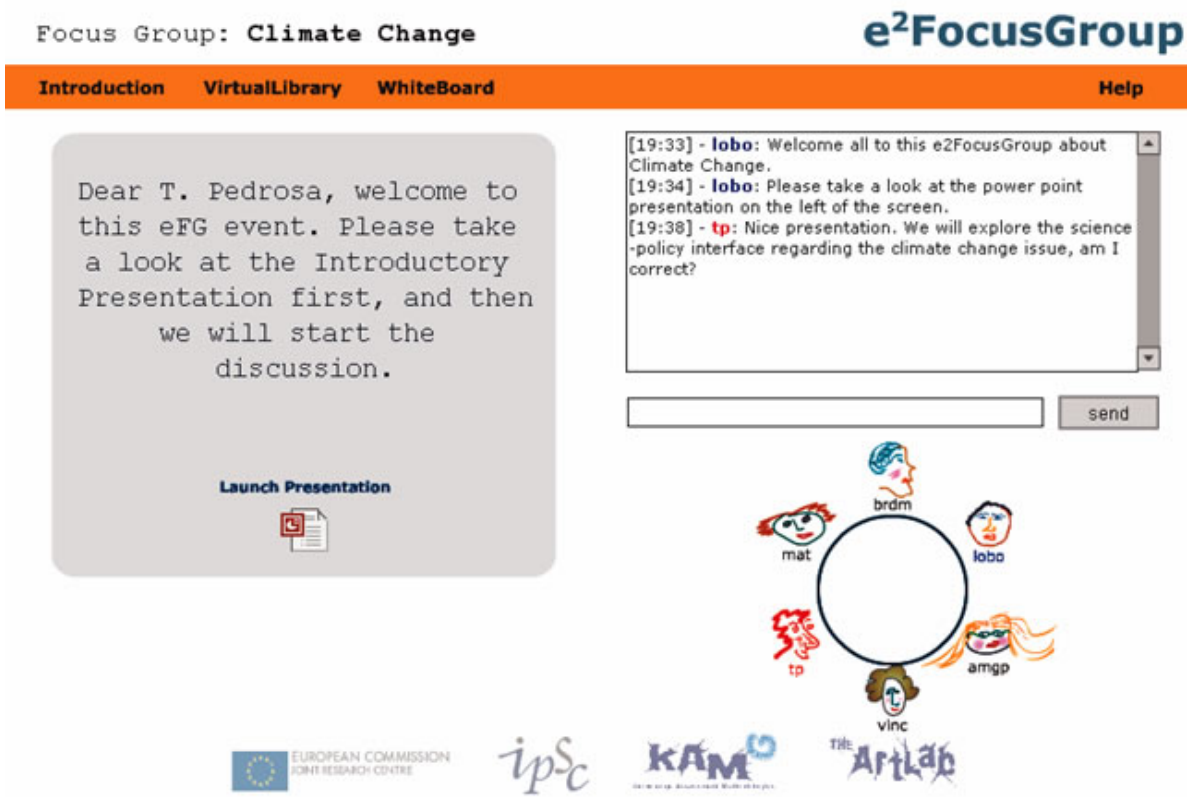
Examples of participatory methods (6)

e2-focus groups



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Examples of participatory methods (7a)

Science based moderated approaches:

Participatory multi-criteria evaluation, Involves the construction of an impact matrix of criteria and alternatives throughout the discussions taking place; exploratory; mapping of knowledge and preferences.

Scenario workshops — Involves the construction of scenarios through participatory methods, where drivers and visions emerge from the discussions

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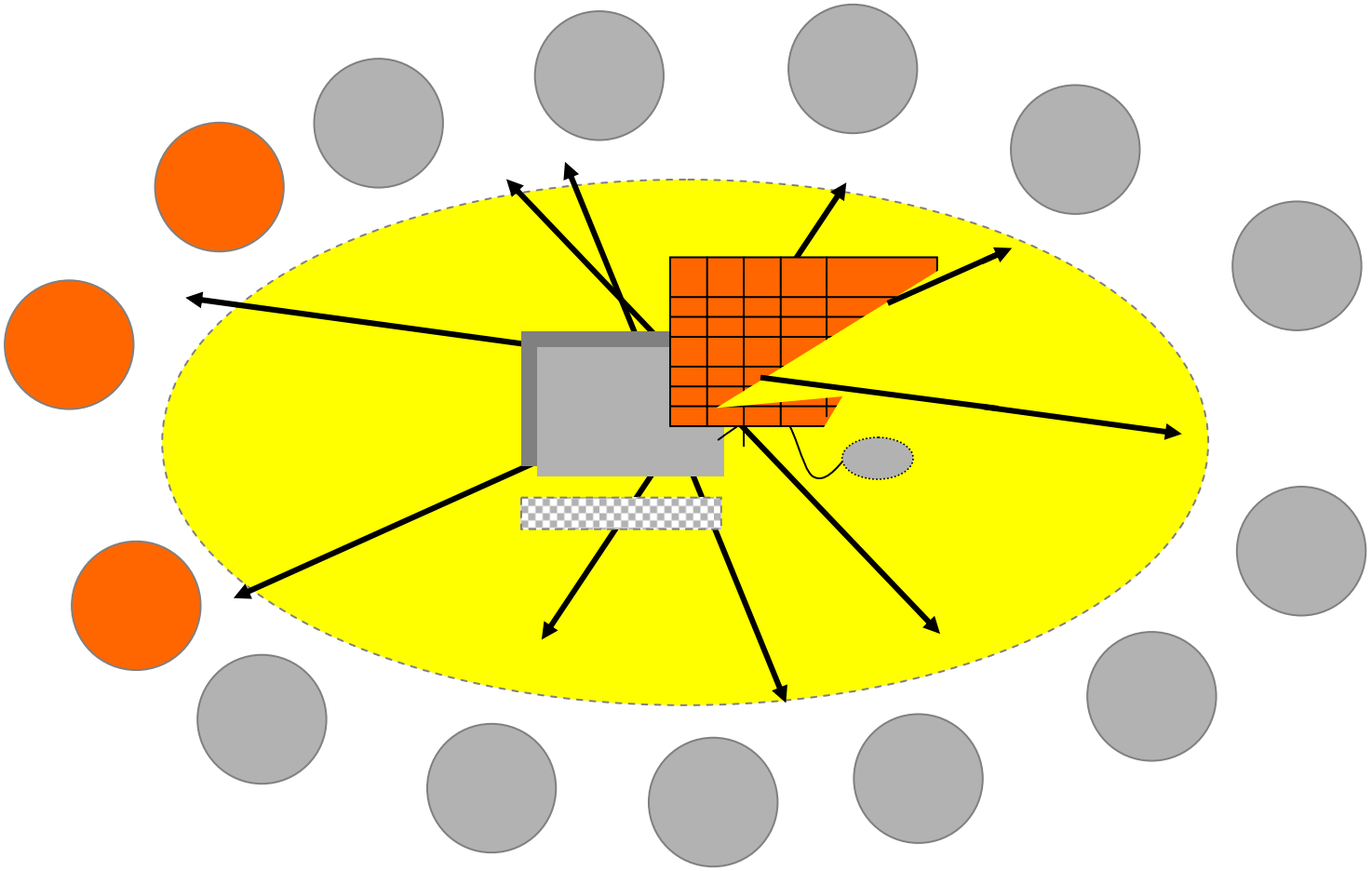
Examples of participatory methods (7)



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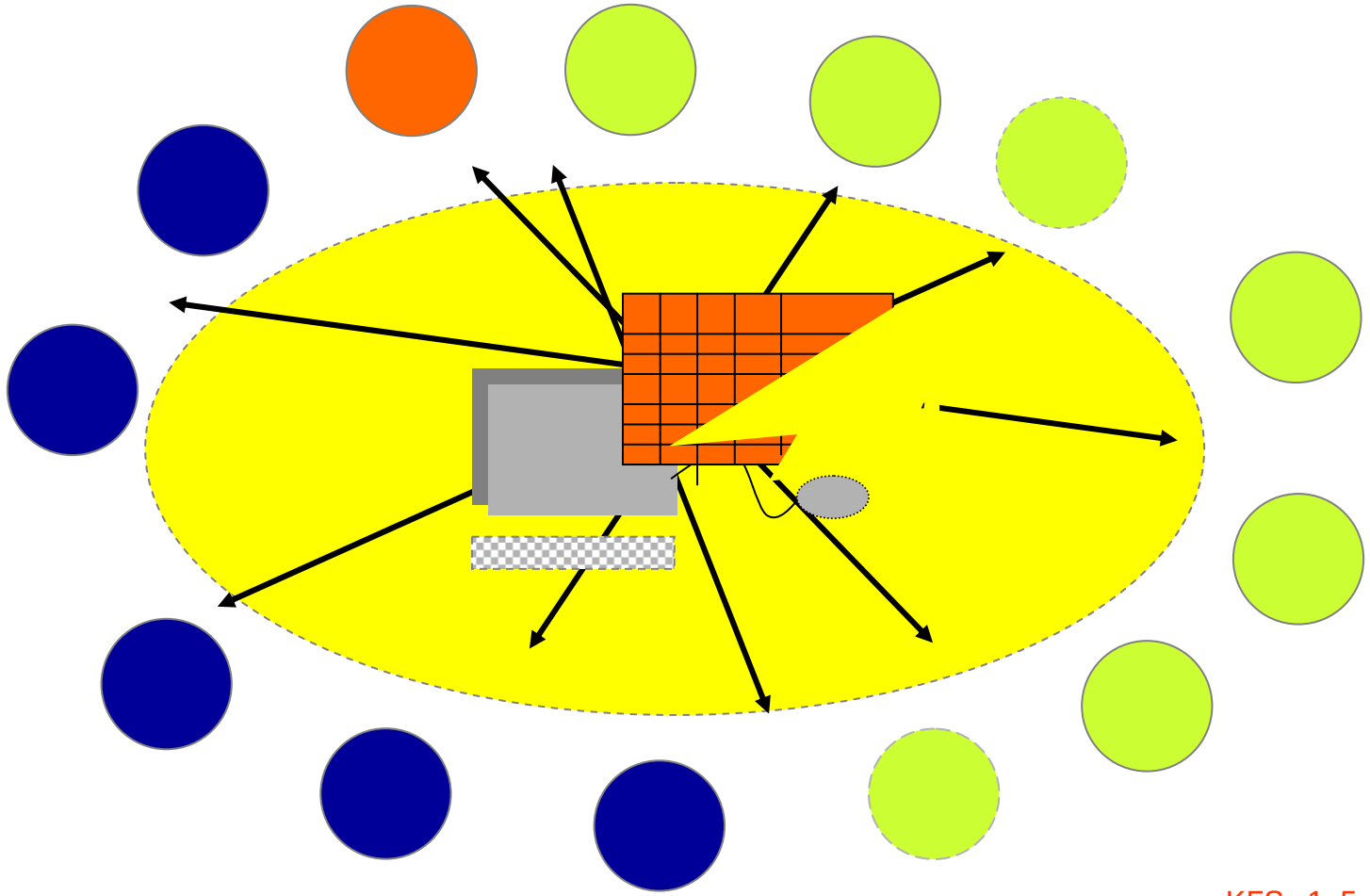
Examples of participatory methods (7b)

Policy exercises — involves participation of scientists and policy makers. It aims at synthesising and assessing relevant multi-disciplinary scientific knowledge in the light of complex practical management problems. Core activities are scenario development, analysis and testing of alternative policy strategies in an organisational setting. Usually deploys models in a gaming atmosphere.

For a scientist is way to get info on human behaviour; for policy makers it is a way to clarify and ascertain strategic policy options in a non-binding way (e.g. IA models used for climate policy exercises in the Netherlands). Roots are in political-military simulation games.

Examples of participatory methods (7b)



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Setting up… (1)

CONTEXT:

► In what context is public involvement being required? [Research, policy or legal requirement, etc…; At which stage of a process is the participatory process taking place [TIMING]?]

- Context sets expected outcomes and therefore *contract* with participants
- Context sets WHO the participants are
- Context sets participatory method
- Context sets the level of involvement of participants in the "process" [type of contribution that is done by participants to the process (early stages may mean co-design and sharing responsibility; final stages may mean seeking for legitimacy…)]

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Setting up… (2)

"AUDIENCE":

Who are the participants? What interface is required?

Issues:

→Identification of participants (stakeholders, social actors, "getroffenen" (suffers), those concerned)

→Recruitment criteria – raises issues of representation

→Format of the participatory process

→Nr of participants

→Information communication requirements

→Tokens and agreements

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Setting up… (3)

PARTICIPATORY METHOD:

→Choice depends on:

- context,
- type of audience,
- issue under scrutiny,
- desired outcome (including institutional projection)
- timing, costs, etc.

N.B. “Poor practice is not necessarily a result of lack of time and money”... *in Involve, 2005*

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Setting up… (4)

PLANNING OF THE VENUE:

- Number of sessions
- Duration
- Agenda
- Props [design of appropriate interfaces to introduce the issues; e.g. if science is relevant, communication/ mediation of this sort of knowledge has to be considered]
- Access to resources
- Invitation letters

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Setting up… (5)

OUTCOME:

- Outcomes depend upon context and “audience”
- Policy binding or non-binding outcomes [degree of influence in decision/policy process; how genuine is impact of the process?]

- Formats may be reports, statements, checklists, audio, video, moderator notes, etc., scenarios, model outputs [→ ideally “operable” by the target institution and in line with participants resources]

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Setting up… (6)

MODERATION:

- Style of moderation: role should be explicit and open to discussion – negotiator, mediator, facilitator, arbitrator or…
- Number of moderators and composition of the moderators team
- Rules of moderation agreed within the team

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Principles of good practice…

- Knowledge sharing
- Congruence – in information provided and on requirements from the audience
- Resources – parties have resources that shall be recognised
- Trust – condition for effective and creative collaboration

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A reflection…

"bad participatory practice creates mistrust, wastes peoples' time and money and can seriously undermine future attempts at public engagement.

Any subsequent proposals for involvement are highly to be greeted with cynicism and suspicion.

A positive history of participation seems the key determining factor in the willingness of people to get involved again…" in Involve, 2005

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