



Communication in Policy contexts

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The issues

- **Working timeframes**
- **Problem framing**
- **What and who defines “enough information”**
- **Quality standards**
- **Backgrounds**
- **Request for certainty (policy vs. science)**
- **Trust**
- **Distance / process**

Characteristics of decision making

- ill-structured problems
- dynamic environments
- shifting, ill-defined or competing goals
- action, feedback loops
- multiple players
- organizational goals and norms

(Berryman, 2006)

- facts are uncertain
- values in dispute
- stakes are high
- decisions are urgent

(Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1990, 1992)

Berryman, J. (2006) What defines 'enough' information? How policy workers make judgments and decisions during information seeking: preliminary results from an exploratory study, Information Research, vol 11, n.4

Funtowicz, S. O. & Ravetz, J. R. 1990: Uncertainty and Quality in Science for Policy. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press.

Funtowicz, S. & Ravetz, J.R. 1992: Three types of risk Assessment and the Emergence of Post-Normal Science. In S. Krimsky and D. Golding (eds.), Social Theories of Risk, Westport, CT, Praeger. 251-273.

How are decisions made?

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Many times decisions are made “based upon the best available science”

But also the choices made “require judgment based upon an interpretation of the evidence.”

(US EPA administrator in relation with the revision of air pollution standards)



Principles of emerging styles of governance

European White paper on Governance COM(2001) 428

- **openness**
- **participation**
- **accountability**
- **effectiveness**
- **coherence**

Democratising expertise

- access and transparency
- accountability
- quality
- plurality
- effectiveness
- early warning and foresight
- independence and integrity

When communicating...

Explain how evidence was produced

Account for minority views

Make explicit uncertainties

Acknowledge who provided the expertise

What are the usual sources of information



- newspapers
- brief communications (from 1 paragraph to 1 page)
- advisors or trusted groups
- isolated events / meetings
- boards of stakeholders or experts

What can you do

Publications to increase policy maker awareness

Internet

Executive Summary

Other intermediary platforms (networks, workshops, institutions)

Language; Transparency; No-regret solutions; Interpretative framing; Deal explicitly with uncertainty

Relevance of the communication



Keep in mind the policy relevancy of your message

Are those facts helpful for my cause?

Are the answers given to me relevant?