

Facilitating PSS Workshops: A Conceptual Framework and Findings from Interviews with Facilitators

Peter Pelzer, Robert Goodspeed and Marco te Brömmelstroet

Abstract

Recent research has emphasized the importance of workshops as a venue where planning support systems (PSS) are used in planning processes. Empirical studies of these workshops have previously largely overlooked facilitation, in particular the role of a moderator (steering the discussion) and/or a chauffeur (steering the PSS). Drawing on existing facilitation research, we identify four main categories of facilitation interventions: substantive, procedural, relational, and tool-related. We use these categories to develop a novel conceptual framework for facilitation at PSS workshops. We test and develop this framework through semi-structured interviews with eight experienced facilitators of PSS workshops in the US and the Netherlands. The interviews confirm the validity of the intervention categories, but also revealed a wider range of PSS-specific workshop outcomes. We conclude that successful facilitation of PSS workshops requires two different types of facilitation interventions: some to encourage PSS use, and others to prevent PSS domination of the group discussion. Facilitating PSS workshops is mainly about finding the delicate and context-dependent balance between these two extremes.

P. Pelzer

Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University, P.O. 80.115, 3508 TC Utrecht, Netherlands

Email: P.Pelzer@uu.nl

R. Goodspeed (corresponding author)

Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan, 2000 Bonisteel Blvd., Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA

Email: rgoodspe@umich.edu

M. te Brömmelstroet

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Achtergracht 166, 1018 WV Amsterdam, Netherlands

Email: M.C.G.teBrommelstroet@uva.nl