



“Mountain sustainability: transforming research into practice”

Summary of the mountain.TRIP lunchtime session at the Global Change and the World's Mountains Conference, 26-30 September 2010, Perth UK

The mountain.TRIP team invited scientists willing to share their experiences in knowledge transfer, practitioners from administrations, associations, private enterprises, or NGOs, interested in discussing information needs and channels, and any participants interested in a discussion on the transfer of research results into practice. The goals of the lunchtime session were to inform about mountain.TRIP and its preliminary findings, to engage participants in a discussion about the knowledge transfer process from science to practice and to collect information and feedback for the further improvement of the project's outcomes.

The 1 hour lunchtime session brought together 24 participants, mostly scientists. The following statements were made from an academic point of view or, in another sense, by scientists drawing on their experiences in working with practitioners.

Involvement of practitioners

The participating scientists stated that it sometimes proves to be a real challenge to find practitioners who get actively involved in projects. On the other hand there are projects with a Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) as e.g. the EU-funded BioBio project. This project has been initiated by practitioners' side, namely by farmers who expressed the need for indicators in the field of organic farming. The main product, a handbook of indicators, will consequently be marketed via the stakeholders. This project could serve as best practice example. The composition of a project team is crucial. Ideally there should be people for basic research, for modeling, for communication, and then for the practical side (research stream).

Tools

The communication aspect is extremely important, and it is crucial to find the right language to talk to the practice. Traditional tools are certainly still preferred by practitioners, but the mountain.TRIP team should also follow-up web 2.0 tools. A good database is valuable for practitioners.

Whiteboard seminars or online conferences are more geared towards scientists. But: there are often technical problems (as experienced in this session!). It might make more sense to produce a CD and distribute it to people. A participant working with communities in Mexico stated that she is in fact working with people without internet access. Here only information on paper is usable.

For practitioners with internet access a search filter would be an ideal tool: if a scientist searches for information on a topic he should get all the basic documents, but when you click “practitioner” you should get filtered information. So you should be able to say “I am a policy maker working on this and this level, and I am looking for hydrological information”.

Another participant replied to this statement, that in fact there are functions like “Google scholar” or the ISI web of knowledge where you can define what type of information you are looking for.

Often it is a problem that the information exists, but that it costs too much to access it. Not even a person from a public administration, in this case the Swiss federal administration, can access certain data for free. The problem is not a technical one, but one of data access. This message should go back to the funding agencies!



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