

Wageningen UR IPOP-program

Informational Governance: contours 2013

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1. Aim and relevance

At the crossroad of two major developments – the emerging Information Age and shifts in modes of governance – a new phenomenon has been identified and experimented upon recently: informational governance. The concept of informational governance is new and refers to the idea that information (and informational processes, technologies, institutions and resources linked to it) is fundamentally restructuring processes, institutions and practices of governance, making them essentially different from conventional modes of governance. Where conventional governance highly relies on authoritative resources, belief in information control, and state power, in informational governance information is becoming a crucial (re)source with transformative powers for a variety of actors, although nobody is in control of information. This fundamentally changes the role of information, including scientific information, in societal processes.

These trends raise new questions about how the means of information transfer and the framing of information affect attitude and behaviour of people. Also questions about how the dynamics of governance processes are influenced, for example in the relation between government and self-steering communities, or in the international arena with variable legislation and opinions about the relation between individual and common interests.

IPOP-Informational Governance focuses on emerging new ways of governance by information as well as on the consequences of the new information age for governance. The aim is (1) to gain understanding of the potential of information to replace or extend conventional governing methods, and (2) gain understanding of the impact of the unrestricted access to information and its spread by social media in governance processes. We develop new methods to supply and deal with information in governance processes. While this is an interdisciplinary objective that cuts across all scientific domains, our focus will be on two themes related to the potential of nature to improve the quality of life: IG & sustainable food chains and IG & multifunctional land systems.

The programme will position Wageningen UR as a leading innovative centre in informational governance research.

Its societal significance will focus on more understanding how information and information processes influences societal processes, how information can be managed to enforce the role of information in governance, including the role of social media as an emerging informational transfer means, and presenting new views and tools for environmental governance by information. The program will throw new lights on the role of scientific information in the information age.

2. Description and coherence of program

The program consists of 14 projects in 4 themes. All projects last until the closing date of the programme.

The first and second theme address the potentials of information as a governance instrument, both in international food and fibre chains and local environmental governance.

The third and fourth theme consider the impacts of the rapid and unlimited spread of information. The third theme is about governing with information in relation to differences in culture and legislation in the international arena as well as with respect to individual rights on privacy; all these aspects cause debate and conflicts complicating the use of information in governance processes. The fourth theme considers the specific role of social media in the dynamics of informational governance.

1. The practice of informational governance across scales

Informational governance, defined as using information systems to enhance sustainability, is used in many resource domains and production chains (wood, food from fisheries and agriculture) all over the world. These systems aim to restructure practices and to change actors behaviour towards sustainability. How do these systems evolve in daily practices? How effective are these information systems, how do these information systems influence producer and consumer behaviour? Information systems that cut across scales are interesting in particular. How do global standards influence local practices and vice versa.

William Cook PhD, supervisors Turnhout/Van Bommel. *Information production through auditing of using FSC (wood) and carbon sequestration labels at the local level; how does it enact these standards and how is the information used at the global level to improve enactment of the standard?*

Coen van Wagenberg KB/LEI. *Information systems in governing food-consumer chains- what is the impact on individual behaviour?*

Ellen Hoefnagel KB/LEI. *Developing new technologies in information processing to be used by fishers to better keep (collectively and flexible by way of self-governance) fish stocks above their critical level?*

2. How information enhances the capacity of local communities to govern their common pool resources

Local communities are becoming (increasingly) responsible for implementing sustainable use of ecosystems and landscapes. These communities face the challenge to reconcile individual and collective values, in situations characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity. Collaborative processes, institutionalized relationships such as governance networks, and trust are conditional to develop a learning capacity for managing ecosystem and landscape services. Information plays a key role in fostering learning processes and adaptive capacity, either directly because it shows how resources can be used, or indirectly by changing the structure of governance networks. For example, this may be information about benefits that ecosystem services may provide to different interest groups and about physical conditions in the landscape that are required to provide these

benefits. Such information may be delivered by scientist. Information can also be collected in governance networks themselves, for example on progress made in local environmental management.

Alexey Pristupa PhD, supervisors Amelung/Lamers *Analysing current information gathering and use in arctic systems, designing more effective systems. Ecosystem services, oil and gas exploitation, tourism.*

Claire Vos KB/Alterra. *Framing ecosystem service benefits in relation to stakeholder demands and values, how does it affect response to/acceptance of information on the potential benefits of landscape change? Managing multifunctional green networks providing ecosystem services in social-ecological systems.*

Rosalie van Dam KB/Alterra *Role of information and information processing in the institutionalization of green urban initiatives of citizens. Managing green Urban networks/urban landscapes.*

Bas Breman KB/Alterra *Participatory monitoring as a method to collect information that sustains learning, how it fosters building trust in governance networks, and whether and how it allows more flexible governance arrangements in integrated water management. Managing catchment areas/multifunctional landscapes.*

3 Contested processes of information use and provision

Governments and markets organize information provisioning to govern sustainable management of resources. Because of the involvement of many actors, bringing with them different frames and interests, governance actors have to cope with contested information. There is also the process of information provisioning and use. These processes can become contested when they conflict with normative principles such as rights on privacy, freedom of speech, and cultural values. Because most resource management and production chains crosscut local communities and even nations, organizing legitimate use of information (up-scaling information) challenges contemporary governance.

Kleoniki Kipourou PhD. Supervisors Jansen/ Korthals. *New pesticide registration, equivalency to already existing pesticide is contested criterion based on complex information*

Eva van der Zee PhD, Supervisors Van der Meulen/Fischer. *Food labels on internet, information on new food production technologies, placed there by national governments cause conflicts in the international arena of food-consumer chains. How are labels interpreted, used, contested, by international public. How can information provisioning regulated to be effective?*

Joeri Naus PhD, Supervisors Spaargaren/VdHorst. *Exploring the tension between sustainability and privacy in collecting information on energy consumption on the household level and using this information by energy providers, regulators, household members and fellow-consumers.*

4 Role and potential of new (uncontrolled) information systems in science and governance

Social media are computer aided communications systems, that facilitate fast information streams and facilitate social networks, such as twitter, hyves, Facebook, emails, wikipedia etc. These social media are increasingly restructuring our science (increased data availability; but also loss of credibility and authority) and governance (with radicalized disclosure such as Wikileaks, new forms of crime and espionage, new relations between politicians and voters, new political spaces, etc.). They influence the

production, use, release, framing, accessibility, demand, and verification of information. How do social media influence or restructure the governance of sustainable agro-food and environmental systems?

Aarts/Dewulf PhD Start early 2013. *Social media as the new playing field for the governance of sustainable agro-food systems: Twitter hypes, controversies and stakeholders' strategies.*

Irini Salverda/Marleen Onwezen KB/Alterra & LEI *Social media and social entrepreneurship.*

Karin Zimmerman KB/LEI *Connect4Action. (Social media to inform innovations in food technology about consumer wishes).*

Anne-Charlotte Hoes KB/LEI. *Management of change through internet? Start 2013.*

Projects finished.

Two exploratory projects were finished in 2012, and continued as a 3 year project under theme 4.

- **Hoes** KB-project/LEI *Exploring the practice of information-co-creation between agricultural entrepreneurs, researchers and advisors for agricultural change.*
- **Onwezen** KB-project/LEI. *Role of emotions in information use via social media to stimulate sustainable consumer behaviour.*

Deliverables 2013

- Position paper on informational governance of the environment and agro-food and fiber chains by the project leaders of the program
- Manuscript on theoretical framework by a group of researchers from the program
- 5-8 papers submitted to International journals
- A proposal for a special issue in a major international journal
- A 2-day work conference for researchers of the program
- A plan for an international conference in 2014
- Series of lunch talks with invited speakers
- A plan for a minor on Informational Governance in Wageningen
- A list of Master theses
- A website
- A you tube film presenting the program
- A symposium for Dutch policy makers at national and regional level and/or a Lunch presentation at the Ministry of EZ
- A papers in a Dutch journal

3. International dimension

- Two projects have links to international research projects: Connect4Action (EU-KP7) and Ecompris (GIFT-T! Interreg project)
- Half of the projects use data from international sources and compare informational governance cases from several countries (two projects in theme 3), or have international governance networks as object of study (European fisheries, Arctic regions, International food and wood chains)
- We start with building up an international research network on Informational governance of the environment and food/fibre chains, to prepare for international projects.

4. Acquisition

Informational governance is new. It is not yet recognized as a field that offers something interesting for customers. We think it has great potential though, since business and policy is deeply involved in using information and seek effective and acceptable ways to influence producers, customers and citizens behaviour. In 2013 we prepare basic actions to build up the playing field for acquiring additional funding:

- A You Tube film to tell our story
- We start building up a network of European research partners
- We organize a symposium for Dutch policy makers
- Additional targeted activities in the food industry based on in theme 1

5. Communication

A short powerpoint presentation introducing the program, to be used by all researchers if they present their project

A workshop storytelling: the result is a 3 minute story about the essence of the program

A short video to tell the story of Informational governance in three minutes (you tube format)

Regular news on the website

Encourage the use of twitter to discuss issues in the society

6. Education

Informational Governance hardly exists as a topic in education. We are exploring ways to raise awareness. Currently we strive for:

- A proposal for a minor
- A list of Master thesis that can be done on subjects within the program