JUST-A-GRID, when people co-model fair resource allocation

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Abstract

Based on several operational implementations in Europe and Africa, we introduce the "JUST-A-GRID" method used for helping stakeholders’ groups to formulate their preferred allocation of multiple resources. For viable management of socio-environmental systems, such input provides a long-term framing or envelope of the trajectories or action space. It also shapes the distributive justice principles impacting on resilience via efforts’ intentions. Evolved initially (1999) from preference elicitation experiments for multi-criteria decision aid, it is designed as a simple, transposable, generic protocol for bringing all levels stakeholders to structure and debate resources’ allocation. JUST-A-GRID combines an apparatus and a protocol, which are used normally after the (participatory) baseline assessment. It’s compatible with any group, any size, can be multi-scaled and computerized.

The apparatus is composed of a grid drawn on paper or a set of structured boxes, each one representing a category of action or an intervention domain or target sector. It also includes bags of tokens or marbles, representing the resources’ units. There can be one or many types.


P1: All participants or the facilitators select the main target sub-regions and domains or issues (e.g. nature / livelihood / industry), or main aims (maximum 10 choices), drawn on the grid.

P2. Participants or the facilitator select no more than 5 resources’ categories (money, land, labor, willingness...), with a given token color. Alternatively, one single generic resource ("effort") can be chosen. Units are abstracted, or instantiated for expressivity. Participants get (3 to 5) units of each type.

P3. Participants, isolated, distribute all their resource units to the P1 boxes, recording on their sheet.

P4. All together synchronously they put on the shared grid the tokens as they wrote it. They observe the resulting stacks’ distribution. From this, they try to agree on a joint

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allocation reduced again to the individual number, and show it with different tokens. Divergences are noted.

P5. (option) Everyone put "PostIt®" on the target boxes to specify constraints they see for each.

P6. (option) With other "PostIt®" on boxes, they propose actions to contribute to each.

P7. The debriefing discuss the difference between individual and collective allocation, the constraints, especially for targets with much "investment", and the coherence between actions’ set and importance.

Later the results are used in the planning phases and ultimate selection of actions, to evaluate the alignment of the initial JUST-A-GRID intention and the final plan.

Through different versions, JUST-A-GRID has been used since 2000 in France, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, Niger, Mali, South-Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda. We don’t discuss here the resulting distributions, but we compare implementations details (grid, resources, schedule) and rationales, adapted to the context and aims. We show integration with other methods including participatory modeling, role playing game, participatory planning and process evaluation.

**Keywords:** social justice, participation, resource allocation, fairness, method