

The Five-Feature Framework for Practical Stakeholder Engagement

Treasure Valley Project: Boise River Basin Water Management

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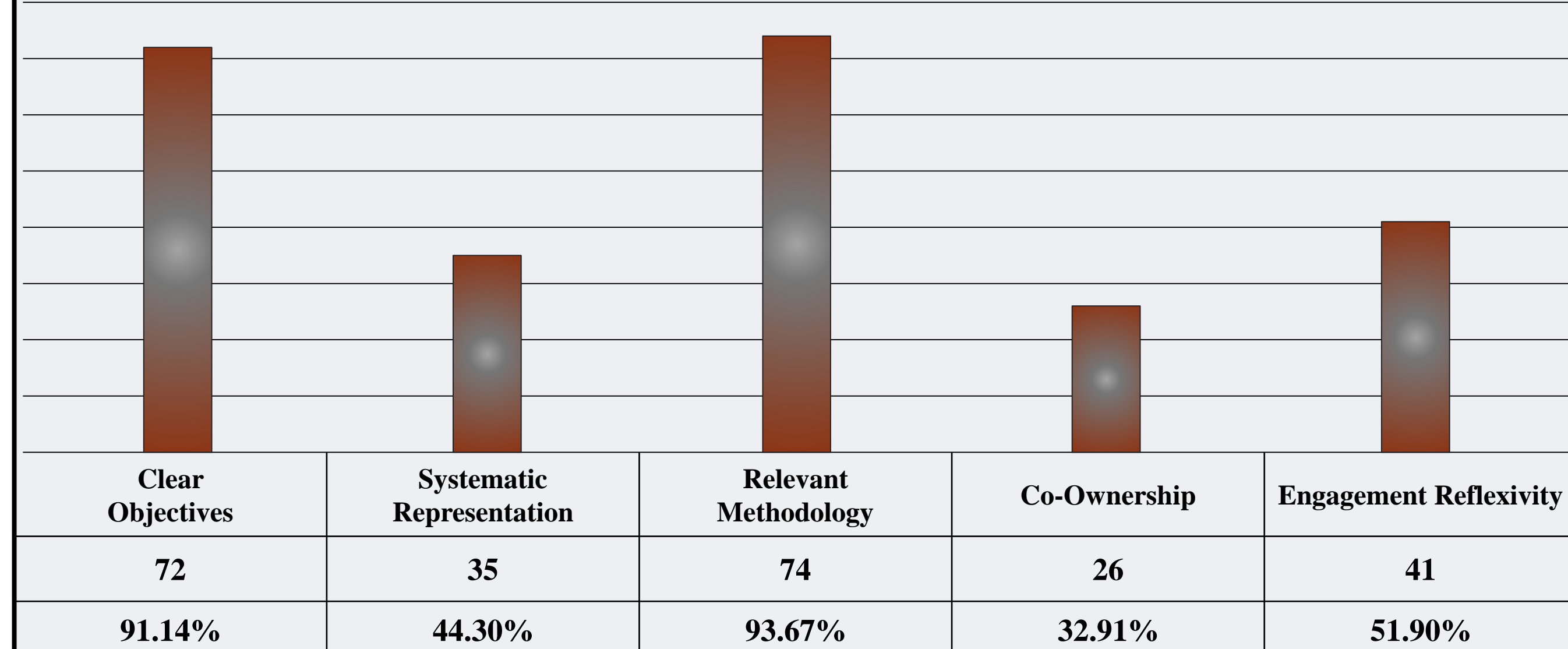
What is a rigorous framework for stakeholder engagement that respects the special challenges natural resources managers face?

Abstract

Natural resource management is increasingly recommending the inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making. The aim of this project is to evaluate how social and natural scientists conceive of 'stakeholder engagement' and how they apply it in practice. We introduce the Five-Feature Framework that provides best practices to engage citizens in natural resource management.

Methods & Results

- Identified top resource management journals publishing case studies by impact factor [returned 5 results]
- Filtered articles by searching "stakeholder engagement" as a term-of-art [returned 170 articles]
- Filtered case-studies from other work [final count of 79 articles]
- Coded articles against Five-Feature Framework [presence/absence]



Stakeholder Engagement: The Five-Feature Framework

Set clear objectives

- Allows organizers to plan ahead, ensuring best-practices are met
- Shared objective setting helps address potential conflicts and make intentions and expectations clear

Systematically represent stakeholders

- Avoids marginalizing groups which can bias results, lead to a lack of support, and undermine moral and democratic principles

Utilize relevant methodology

- Tailor methods to desired objectives and outcomes
- Recognize physical, cultural, and social obstacles (e.g. language barriers, dominant hierarchies)

Create opportunities for co-ownership

- Provide opportunities for genuine input and influence over process
- Meets democratic ideal, increases social learning, promotes collaboration, and leads to better solutions

Reflect on the process and outcomes

- Allows organizer to address obstacles iteratively, ensuring best-practices are continually met and adjusting if necessary

Discussion

The Well-Intentioned Scientist

- Engagement may not be well developed as the desire to have research serve a greater good may motivate scientists to engage resource managers *ad hoc*. Although well-intentioned, it is only part of the equation and should not replace the methods and frameworks developed to guide robust engagement.

External Motivation

- Mandated engagement may promote superficial treatment of some factors. As more agencies recommend engagement (e.g. NSF Broader Impacts Criteria), researchers should aim for same scientific rigor in engagement as they do in natural sciences.

All Things to All People

- It may be that everyone is a stakeholder, and it is implausible to engage everyone leading to *ad hoc* identification processes, perhaps accounting for lower representation and co-ownership scores. Conceptual challenge aside, rigorous framework helps to ensure a minimum quality to engagement.



Connections, Synergies, and Future Directions



- The Five-Feature Framework is currently being applied within MILES projects with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bullitt Foundation.
- This framework establishes a rigorous and consistent method for engaging local stakeholders and will be used throughout the remainder of the MILES project. This helps establish Boise State University as a community partner and future collaborator.
- Results to be submitted to *Ecology and Society*, potentially impacting the quality of resource engagement writ large.