Part 2: Finding and appraising solutions using MCDA – Results interpretation

In the following, a short interpretation and reflection of the results shown in the MiroBoard_results2.pdf file is given.

Yellow group (page 1)
This group focused on solutions and in which order to implement them rather than thinking about steps or phase through which to develop and evaluate solutions. This is a typical outcome where different parties are overly focused on some solution that they deem relevant, prefer or control, while ignoring they are highly interdependent with others. Instead, the group should have specified the process to entail to develop solutions and to appraise them.

Green group (page 2)
The green group in contrast did come up with a reasonable process. Its strong points are that it starts out from a stakeholder consultation, considers resource constraints (budget) and personal benefits along with some process rationality. As weaker points is the assumption that problems can be prioritized and solved by priority– this may be possible in a situation where one single actor can unilaterally decide and hence prioritize based on their values and goals and also it assumes a certain degree of independence between problems. In a complex, multi-actor situation, however, in which there is high interdependency, this is not a realistic assumption. Rather different prioritizations that require negotiation between actors as well as accounting for feedbacks between solutions may be necessary.

Magenta group (page 3)
The magenta group also developed a process. It is good that it starts out from the main problem as per some perspective, followed by solutions to that problem and which actors could implement it. Weaknesses are that it is not made clear what are the goals that underlie the problems identified and which the solutions should achieve. Also, going for the ones that are easy to implement only may create an illusion of addressing "the problem" without achieving the results (assessment and evaluation steps are missing). Lastly, it is good to identify which actors could implement which solution, yet it also needs to be assured that it is in their interest to do so (i.e. what are their goals?).

Blue group (page 4) and purple group (page 5)
Similar observations as or the yellow group.

What the above groups are missing is to define what makes a "good" solution and to realize that this will depend on the perspective and interests of the actor. None of the groups has considered the critical step to clarify the values that drive the perception of the problems of the specific actor and to identify the goals that they want to achieve. Also, the process and approach for choosing is not really addressed, other than the green group suggesting to involve experts and researchers to support appraisal. If the intention is to meet the goals of the actors, then it is important to define criteria to measure their attainment and to use these for assessing alternatives. Experts and researchers can help with informed estimates of this attainment.

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