



DESIRE WB-3 Stakeholder Workshop 1 report

WP3.1 Stakeholder Workshop 1 report held in Greece, Crete, Herakleion, Agia Varvara - November 26th, 2008.

Authors: E. Vlachos, C. Karavitis, K. Kosmas, V. Fassouli

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*Agricultural University of Athens,
Department of Natural Resources
Development and Agricultural Engineering.*

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DESIRE



**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING
GREECE, CRETE, HERAKLEION, AGIA VARVARA
AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
PARTICIPANT 9**

Introduction

The last 35 years quite significant changes characterize planning and management of natural resources in U.S.A. The exuberance of the early 1970s with the campaigns to clean the environment , the commitment to comply with the newly introduced National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the initial excitement to trying to find new tools to measure and account for changes around us, became in the 1990s a more reflecting and challenging theory and practice. It is a realism necessitated by political, legal and cultural changes with an emphasis on productivity, quality of life, of changing economies and new socio-cultural contexts. Modernity, increasing complexity, public interest and rights and new obligations, within European Union (including questions of subsidiarity) have all underscored the need for new approaches and the exercise of choices. This shifting and transformation are also accompanied by better data and information, more complex models, vastly expanded and computational prowess and innovative organizational and legal arrangements that necessitate combinations of data and judgment in articulating and implementing choices.

The relevant literature has identified three types of responses to natural resources planning and management efforts. The first focused upon the more effective use of existing institutions, as a variety of organizations begun to make a more constructive use of public hearings. The second response was enactment of new legislation which made it mandatory that the views of the public be actively sought, and in many cases rules and procedures for this purpose were set out. Finally a third response was the undertaking of research and experiments to discover improved means of obtaining inputs from the public.

More important, there are certain discernible trends, which underlie the nature, importance and practice of public involvement and participation. In the vast literature of the last 35 years or so, one can particularly emphasize i). the confluence of popular

and scientific interest on the environment and on ecological processes, ii). the veritable explosion of data and information and the urgent need for Decision Support Systems, iii). new conceptual schemes regarding the structure and functioning of environmental systems, iv). new institutional mechanisms, processes and administrative arrangements for managing and accounting for natural resources and for managing space and of various impacts of action on the quality of life, v). increased awareness of the global character, of the interdependence, and of the transboundary character of environmental problems and vi). re-examination of the intertwining of environment and development, including aspects of sustainability, equity, appropriate technology and global change.

In such a context, planning and management in the last 35 years has become more *anticipatory* (with an extended true horizon and , thus, more futuristic); *participatory* by inviting a variety of stake holders and interest groups to engage in joint decision-making; contingency oriented by considering a richer menu of options and a creative mix of alternatives; and finally use of risk assessment that raises questions as to what are acceptable and assumable risks and the trade-offs involved in any decision-making. These considerations are, then, a reflection of the convergence of democratic spirit and participatory practices as reinforced by ecological awareness and increasing environmental ethics.

But it should not also be forgotten that these recent trends have as their underpinning two major revolutions that they have been running: long-established democratic participatory practices (running back to down meetings) and the emergence of broader environmental ethics and concern with the “commons”. The subtle difference from earlier practices is an important transference of who is (or who should be) making the choices and who should be assuming risks associated with public projects. Simply stated, the promotion of the ethics of informed consent.

Citizen participation can be seen as being of two types: the first has to do with a more or less passive group solicited to be a support base *after the fact* of decisions that have been made by other groups or by the central government. The second type is an *active segment* of a pluralistic society participating in a mix of power where options are narrowed, alternatives discussed and particular strategies are chosen. It is this continuum from “passive” to more “participatory” that characterizes the literature on citizens’ involvement. While many still perceive citizens as lacking the information and the professional expertise for highly specialized opinions others view

the public as an important ingredient in decision making despite the fear of significant delays of action to solicit the support for long-term solutions. At the same time, the citizens themselves quite often see governmental units, political figures and experts in an equally uncomplimentary way, namely as incompetent, insensitive, arrogant and power driven. Such a climate creates a mutual distrust, the likely outcome of which is polarized opinions, competing and conflicting interpretations, and absence of a necessary spirit of cooperation.

While there are differences between those who urge citizen participation and those who resist it, public participation as a legal mandate has become part of mainstream planning theory and practice. For some, public participation has become a matter of sound and visionary policy and planning. For others, it implies significant impacts and crucial information for improved decision making. And for others still, public participation is viewed as a means for reducing social tensions and for managing conflicts.

The very terms “Public” and “Participation” are so widely used as to be taken for granted and for being self-explanatory. The definitions vary and the meaning of such terms is colored by the disciplinary background of the particular author. But the source of author is the same, namely, how to accommodate a mounting demand for a greater degree of public involvement. We may, thus, adopt a working definition from the literature of public participation as a systematic process of mutual education and cooperation which provides the opportunity to those affected, political representatives, and technical experts, to work together to create a plan which combines and reflects common values, knowledge, experience, responses and best judgment in a democratic manner.

In such a definition of democratic involvement the two key underlying concepts are those of *representativeness* and *public* (common) interest. And the benefits of the implied participatory values are among others, mutual understanding, inclusive solutions, shared responsibility and sustainable agreements.

The following emerging principles in theory and practice have allowed public participation to become a useful tool for comprehensive planning, assessment and management:

- a) Public participation is a learning process by which each participant acquires a more complete understanding of both central issues and of how other parties in the debate perceive the issues.

- b) Members of the public can provide useful information to the decision maker, especially when values and preferences involved cannot be easily quantified.
- c) Accountability of political and administrative decision makers is likely to be reinforced if the process is open to public view.
- d) Consensus can be built through a systematic process of conflict management.
- e) Public confidence and trust increase when citizens can see that all relevant issues have been fully and carefully considered.
- f) Better decisions can be made by providing traceability and visibility of the decision making process.

All the above points can be summarized by outlining the degrees of public involvement and commitment ranging from public information releases to joint planning and decision making distinctions between public awareness, public involvement and public participation. Public *awareness* implies one-way information and alerting to community issues. Public *involvement* implies two-way communication and a means of engaging community members in the exchange of information (dialogue). Finally, public *participation* is the most intense form of interaction between authorities, experts and citizens and implies more than anything else truly joint planning and democratic delegation of power and shared leadership.

The effectiveness of the public participation process was driven by such considerations as being the mechanism for providing opportunities for members of the public who wish to participate to do so; that the public should be made aware of the availability of such participation opportunities so that they can make that choice; that adequate information should be made available to the public so that they can participate effectively; and that finally, relevant agencies (Desire-Project) should be able to respond effectively to the input and activities of public participants.

Public involvement and participation does not assure a project's success, but a lack of citizen participation in facility planning, virtually guarantees a facility's defeat. In this regard the primary objective of any citizen participation program is to create an informed and solution-oriented public. Obviously, there are different degrees of control over the entire process, but the underlying assumption and commitment is to seek public input at progressive stages of involvement. By definition, participating in planning and decision making is an iterative process

beginning with problem identification all the way to evaluation of alternatives and implementation with feedback loops linking publics, planners and decision makers.

There is no need to elaborate on the obvious observation that the effectiveness of public participation vary significantly from nation to nation, as well as from issue to issue. What is effective in one country may be completely ineffective in others. The understanding of participatory democracy, the commitment to centralized planning, the extent of coordination between governmental units, the representativeness of participants, and the dissonance between political interests and technical expertise are all factors that must be considered in evaluating the potential effectiveness of citizen involvement and participation.

The responsiveness of a given political and institutional culture includes, among others, such considerations as: a) the nature of citizen's rights and their legal standing vis-à-vis environmental matters; b) the scope and political effectiveness of environmental policies; c) programs and projects; d) the role and effectiveness of mass media; e) the role of education (at all levels) in promoting environmental awareness in encouraging forms of active participation and in nourishing voluntarism; f) the presence and extent of citizen activists; and g) the overall socio-political culture and historical traditions.

As mentioned earlier, the issue is not whether there should be participation, but just how participation might be organized and managed. The commitment to public participation in planning derives from the social ethic of planning and from the strong tradition --ethos-- of social acceptance of the common good. The political philosophy of democracy, the commitment to improved decision making, and the need for a wider acceptance implementing actions are all supportive of the general principle of public participation. The ultimate test lies not on the general options of principle, but in the reality of actual arrangements. And, it's final effectiveness rests on three key-words: trust, credibility and believability.

But there is an apparent dilemma in all such recent developments of participatory decision making. As it has been noted by many authors within the last decades or so, society tended to advocate the simultaneous growth of participatory democracy and of expertise in decision making. It becomes difficult to maximize both of these value preferences and strains appear between the idealized conceptions of citizen participation and the harsh demands of public policy making and implementation.

The impediments to change and the resistance to meaningful public participation are proportional to the amount of change required in the general social structure. They are particularly dramatic when a) they threaten vested interests, b) can potentially alter life styles and c) threaten existing networks of long established social values and practices. In such a context, public participation becomes part of larger considerations including the need for institutional arrangements which ultimately facilitate social choice and reflect the willingness of all political actors or units to run risks and incur costs. Furthermore, public participation recognizes a decision making process which takes into account preferences and interests of those clearly affected by a particular decision and produces decisions which are the result of a balance between what is socially desirable, economically viable, technically and ecologically sound, legally pertinent and politically feasible.

At the end, the quest for implementing acceptable, reasonable, feasible, even realistic shared courses of action depend on the two terms running throughout any discussion of public participation, i.e., representativeness and public interest. Whose vision and whose opinion should be incorporated reflect the process of democratic inclusion of increasingly pluralistic societies. The public interest or the common good recognizes both, rights and obligations as well as harmonious coexistence of nature and society. What is simply envisaged is a reasonable approximation between an ideal process of democratic engagement and the reality of socio-economic trade-offs involved in public planning and management. The ensuing dilemma results from a commitment of planners and decision makers to be open to working with citizens and from citizens who must be active and interested in the planning process.

Public Participation Meeting – Agia Varvara Municipality, Crete

The DESIRE Project's Public Participation meeting took place in the Town Hall of Agia Varvara Municipality on Tuesday, November 26th. Before the meeting, extensive preparation steps were undertaken, including

- i) consultations with authorities in order to inform them and to arrange the time and the place of the meeting,
- ii) invitation letters were sent to all parts considered as interested, so as to be sure that they were aware of the meeting and

iii) promotion and advertisement campaign about DESIRE Project and the upcoming meeting in the local media, which lasted approximately 2 months.

The meeting was structured with a panel to conduct the appropriate actions and a facilitator. The panel consisted of the AUA team (DESIRE-Project), namely, C. Karavitis, E. Vlachos (facilitator), K. Kosmas, A. Kounalake and V. Fassoule,

Picture 1. The dialogue that was undertaken, related the importance of public participation in the planning and management of natural resources, the articulation of shared goals and objectives and the raising of consciousness in the practice of meaningful environmental democracy or what could be summarily called “co-decision”.



Picture 1: Panel

The topic was approached as a process that i) communicates the interests and meets the process needs of all participants, ii) seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected, and iii) provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

The participants from AUA, , attempted to inform the stakeholders about the existing environmental situation, according to the results from recent pertinent research, but also about practices that should take place in order to combat resources degradation. Following these introductory remarks and basic premises, Kounalake Aikaterini, Research Assistant, introduced the participants in the “DESIRE-Project” and defined the scope and the objectives of it. Mrs Kounalake was also referred to the historical background of Crete island, emphasizing on the civilizations of Knossos and Festos (Minoan period) and its meaning to water development and also the early

primitive populations and the evolution of agriculture in the area, that is dated from 2100 BC.

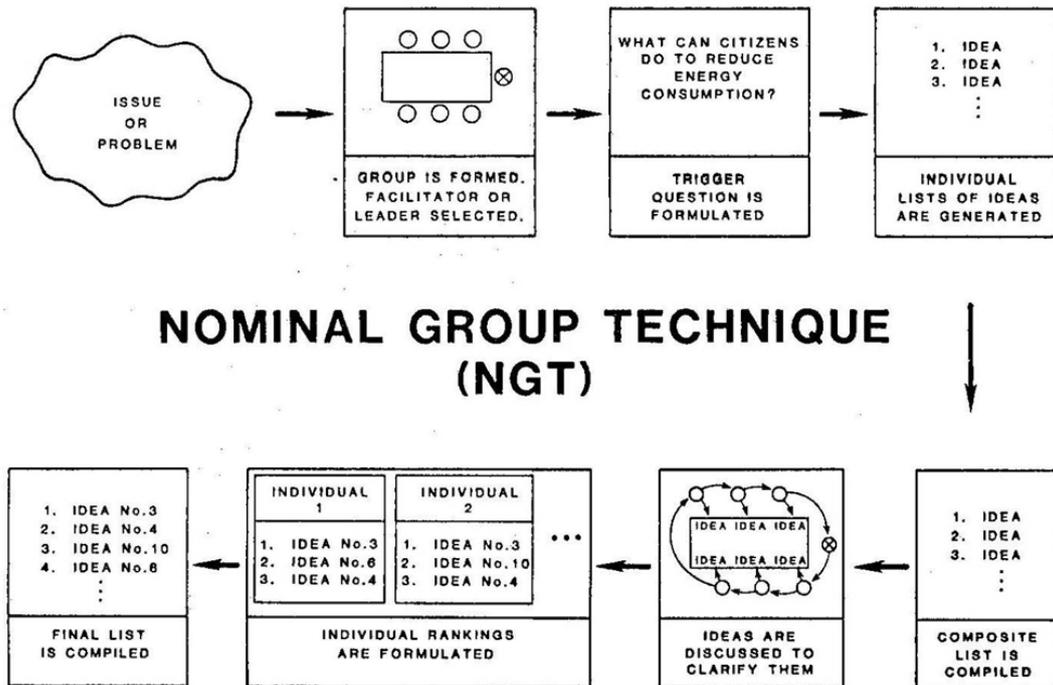
At the same time, it was mentioned that the explosion of Thira's volcano had a profound in the living environment of Crete and its destruction. Mrs Kounalake underlined the development of water civilization, in conjunction with contacts with Mesopotamia, the exploitation of olive trees and how olive oil was used. The continuity of historical evolution, as well as the destruction of forests and some periodic disasters made the desertification of the area become visible.

In the middle of 20th century, when the mechanization of agriculture was increased, the mountainous areas were abandoned and people moved to more fertile plain areas. This fact was the main cause of further erosion. Such a trend was depicted on maps showing the distribution of desertificated areas around the globe (Asia, Africa, Latin America).

In this content, Kostas Kosmas, defined desertification, concentrating in the objectives of the research and the objectives of Desire-Project. He was focused in the desertification risk of Messara Valley, emphasizing in parameters that influence the procedure of desertification, such as climate, drought, forest fires, society, economy, land topography, erosion etc and described the desertification processes that take place in the area of Messara Valley, such as groundwater salinization, land use and the type of plant cover. Prof. Kosmas remarked anthropogenic factors that influence desertification, like mechanization of agriculture, using tractors, cultivators and ploughs that cause i) mechanical erosion (cause of the depth, speed and direction of ploughing) and ii) soil losses that in Greece amount the fraction of 8%. He was also related desertification and water resources and mentioned the silting of the reservoirs that take place in the area. Finally, Prof. Kosmas emphasized in desertification indicators and presented a relevant system, using results of the project DESERTLINKS (DIS4ME indicator database) and maps for risk assessment and gave technical answers to the public.

Then Prof. Vlachos and Prof. Karavitis started the public participation meeting procedure. Prof. Vlachos (facilitator) tried to build consensus among the stakeholders, asked them to express their ideas, options, and opinions about the land degradation that occurs in this area, namely, why they think this occurs and what they think that should be done in order to remediate this degradation.

The technique followed, was the Nominal Group Technique (**Picture 2**), where a formed group discusses about an issue or a problem (desertification), guided by a leader. The ideas expressed, generate individual lists and when the final list is compiled, the ideas are discussed to be clarified and then the composite list is compiled.



Picture 2: Example of Nominal Group Technique (NGT).

All the answers have been recorded on the blackboard fact sheets, easily readable from across the auditorium, **Picture 3**. Extreme care was taken so as not to guide the public towards certain preferences or preferred actions.

The auditorium consisted of several Stakeholder Groups (65 persons) such as:

- 2 Majors
- 6 Municipal Board members
- 15 Farmers
- 10 Prefecture’s scientific personnel
- 5 Priests
- 4 Teachers (education)
- 6 Housewives
- 2 Carpenters
- 1 Journalist
- 1 Butcher
- 5 Retirees
- 2 Banking personnel
- 1 Construction worker

- 2 Merchants
- 1 Doctor
- 1 Employee in forest address
- 1 Owner of oil factory



Picture 3: Public Participation

The answers of the public concerned all the sectors of human life such as society, environment, politics, economy, culture etc. Immediately after that the public was asked to vote, on which of the options they consider as the most important, giving to their first choice importance factor 5 points, to the second 3 points and the third 2 points. There was also the possibility for someone to give all his points (10) to one option, or vote only 2 options dividing his points in all the possible combinations, **Picture 4**. From the 65 persons, only 44 voted, giving the 10 points to their most preferable choices except the Major who voted with 15 points. The results were recorded and analysed and they are presented in the following table (**Table 1**), showing the number of points that each option resulted and the relative indicator that every option leads to.



Picture 4: Voting the most important options

OPTIONS	POINTS	INDICATOR
Law and penalty enforcement	83	Policy enforcement
Soil pollution	40	Reclamation of affected areas
Lack of briefing	37	Policy enforcement
Sustainability – biological crops	27	Vegetation cover type
Infrastructure - creation of economic resources	23	Policy enforcement
Diseases caused by the pollution	22	Policy enforcement
Production cost	19	Policy enforcement
Surface water development	18	Soil water conservation measures
Taking implementation measures	18	Policy enforcement
Water storage	18	Water quantity
The agriculturists are not next to the farmers	17	Policy enforcement
Absence of pollution control	17	Policy enforcement
Forest decrease - reduction	15	Deforested area
Reduction of animal capital	14	Grazing control
Overgrazing (causes - consequences)	12	Grazing intensity
Reforestation (problems)	10	Deforested area
Livestock - sustainability - viability	10	Policy enforcement
Social coherence - depopulation of traditional settlements	7	Population growth rate
Inland - tourism	6	Tourism intensity
Institution of the professional farmer	5	Policy enforcement
Olive fly insecticide	5	Tillage operations
Lack of communication - implementation	5	Policy enforcement
Water oversuction	5	Aquifer over exploitation
Use of information	5	Policy enforcement
Pesticides	3	Tillage operations
Local institutions involvement	2	Policy enforcement
Errors in the distribution of subsidies	2	EU farm subsidies
Bureaucracy	0	Policy enforcement
Olive groves management (weeds)	0	Sustainable farming
Destruction of pasture lands / farmers - stockmen conflicts	0	Grazing intensity
Mechanical destruction of weeds	0	Mechanization index
Reduction of water demand	0	Water consumption / water demands
Decrease of high plant cover	0	Plant cover
New farming institutions	0	Policy enforcement
Experts' employment	0	Policy enforcement
Pollution and contamination of water recipients (rivers etc)	0	Water quality
Evaluation comparatives	0	Policy enforcement
Compaction and pulverization of ground	0	Tillage operations
Refuse dumps- waste dumps	0	Policy enforcement

Table 1: Options expressed in P.P. meeting, points recorded after the voting and the indicator that each option leads to.

The options that resulted first and the points that each one took during the voting procedure are shown in the next **Figure 1**.

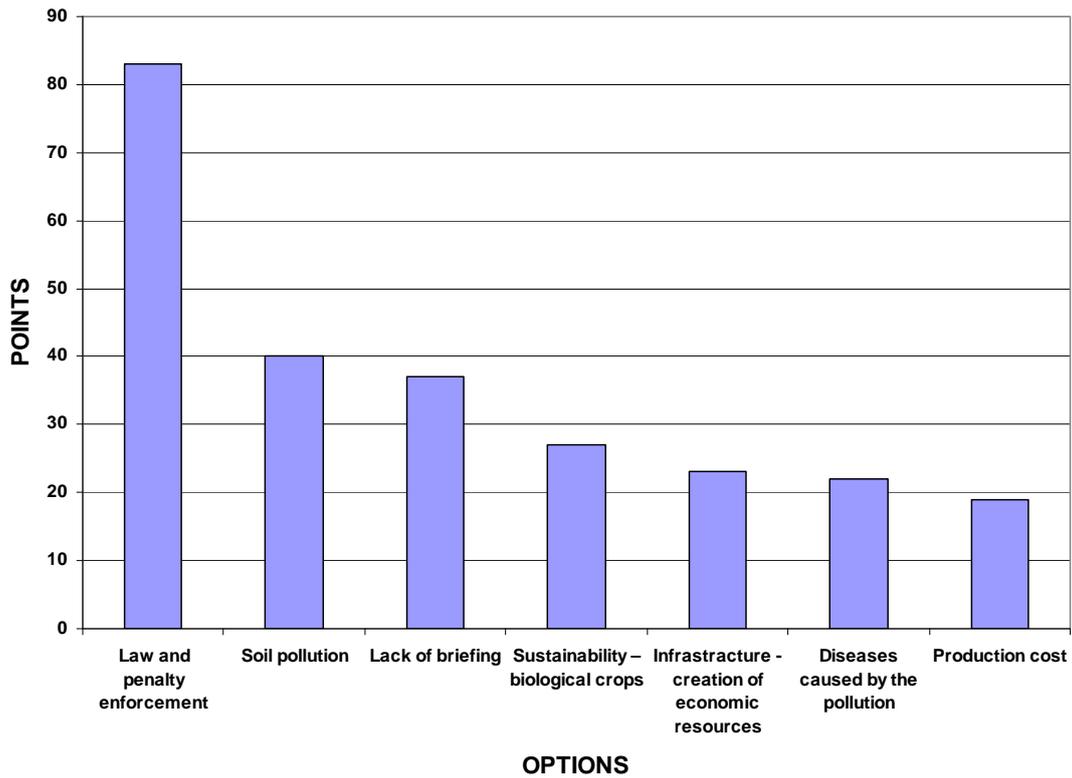


Figure 1: Options that resulted first in the voting procedure.

From the table and the relative diagram it is obvious that the public in Agia Varvara consider the lack of law and penalty enforcement as the most important factor (83 points) for the degradation of their land. Second factor is the soil pollution and right after that resulted the lack of briefing. More or less all the results were expected, what was unexpected was the order of priority in which the options were voted.

Appendix 1: Program of the meeting

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING ATHENS - HERAKLEION - AGIA BARBARA DATE: 24-28 NOVEMBER 2007		
Saturday, November 24th	AUA, ATHENS	
Meeting Preparation : "Setting the stage" (C. Karavitis, E. Vlachos, K. Kosmas, V. Fassouli, Or. Kairis)		
Sunday, November 25th	AUA, ATHENS	
Questionnaire Analysis, Stakeholder Meeting Details (C. Karavitis, E. Vlachos, K. Kosmas, V. Fassouli, A. Kounalaki)		
Monday, November 26th	Public Participation, HERAKLEION, CRETE	
14. ⁰⁰ - 14. ³⁰	Flight to Herakleion	
19. ⁰⁰ - 21. ⁰⁰	Meeting with Local Officials in Agia Barbara (Major, Vice-Major and Other Members of the Municipal Council of Agia Barbara Municipality)	
Tuesday, November 27th	Public Participation, AGIA BARBARA MUNICIPAL BLDG, CRETE	
Stakeholder Meeting 9. ⁰⁰ -18. ⁰⁰ <u>PANEL</u> C. Karavitis E. Vlachos Major of Santa Barbara Municipality K. Kosmas A. Kounalaki V. Fassouli		
Time	Who	Subject
9. ¹⁵ - 9. ³⁰ 0:15	C. Karavitis	Plenary Opening
9. ³⁰ -10. ⁰⁰ 0:30	E. Vlachos	Meeting Details
10. ⁰⁰ -10. ¹⁵ 0:15	Major	Welcome and Greetings
10. ¹⁵ -10. ⁴⁵ 0:30	A. Kounalaki	Introduction for DESIRE-project, Historical Background of the area
10. ⁴⁵ -12. ⁰⁰ 1:15	K. Kosmas	Objectives of the Research, Update for the Achieval Results, Objectives of the DESIRE-project, Desertification Definition and Processes, Parameters, Indicators
12. ⁰⁰ -12. ³⁰ 0:30	Coffee Break	
12. ³⁰ -15. ⁰⁰ 2:30	All	Public Participation Meeting
15. ⁰⁰ -15. ³⁰ 0:30	Lunch Break	
15. ³⁰ -16. ⁰⁰ 0:30	All	Meeting Conclusions
16. ⁰⁰ -18. ⁰⁰ 2:00	Official Dinner	
Wednesday, November 28th	AUA, ATHENS	
Public participation Meeting Conclusions Planning of Future Activities Preparing the Cape Verde Meeting (E. Vlachos, C. Karavitis, K. Kosmas, V. Fassouli)		

References

Evan Vlachos, Colorado State University, Department of Sociology and Department of Civil Engineering (non published material).