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Taking end-users into account – reshaping the environmental decision support research agenda

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Abstract: There is a clear need for the environmental modelling and decision support research community to become more sensitive to the needs and working practices of potential 'end-user' organisations. One aspect of becoming more sensitive will be making more explicit our own reasons for developing a model or decision support tool (DST) in the first place. Are we trying to (i) develop tools to be used by researchers with results used by external organisations, or to; (ii) develop tools for use directly by external organisations to support current actions, or are we trying to; (iii) develop tools for use directly by external organisations but which do not support current actions, but instead support alternative actions or bases to action and in doing so constitute arguments for change in practice? If the answer is (i) we should stop trying to push our technologies out to so called 'end-users' as they will be designed for research needs, not policy needs. If the answer is (ii) we need to better understand what makes a model or DST (a source of information) useful to an organisation. And if the answer is (iii) we perhaps need to consider whether developing a model or DST is the most effective and efficient way of arguing for a change in working practice.

Keywords: decision support; information support; environmental management; environmental policy; decision support tools; research agenda