



Social Analysis Systems^{2.0M}

Concepts and Tools for
Collaborative Research and Social Action

<http://www.sas-pm.com/>

Name of this technique: Personification

Author(s) and correct citation: Jacques M. Chevalier, 'SAS² 1.0: Personification,' in *Social Analysis Systems²*, <http://www-sas-pm.com/>.

Acknowledgements: *Personification* is a SAS² adaptation of a technique used in the field of participatory research (see in particular FAO in *Readings and links*).

What is the goal of Personification?

Personification helps you create a human profile of stakeholder groups ('personify' them) to gain a better understanding of real-life situations. This technique is useful when stakeholders are categories of people who share many characteristics but are not organized and have no way to represent themselves.

What are the guiding principles of Personification?

- Some actors may share many common characteristics but are not organized and have no way to represent themselves. If you want your project activities to reflect the views of these stakeholder groups, you can describe each group as a 'person' with a specific profile (such as living under certain conditions or behaving and thinking in certain ways).

Here's how to use Personification

1. Identify a **core problem or action** where you need to understand who the stakeholders are. Define the problem or action as clearly as possible, and clarify the purpose of this exercise.

2. Make a list of the **key stakeholder groups** involved in the problem or action identified in Step 1 (see *Stakeholder Identification*). Note that you may include yourself and those who are doing the analysis in your list. You may define the representatives of a group as a stakeholder different from those they represent. Also you may include the community of all stakeholders in your list, as a group with its own profile.
3. For each stakeholder group create a **profile** using characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, income, and residence. Make sure that these characteristics relate to your core problem or action.
4. Include in your analysis other characteristics that describe how each stakeholder group can **affect or be affected** by the problem or action identified in Step 1. Give special attention to the power, the legitimacy, the interests, the social relations (collaboration and conflict), the values, and the stated positions of each stakeholder group (see *Social Analysis CLIP* and the *VIP* technique).
5. Create one or several **case stories** that show how the stakeholder groups you have profiled would respond to the problem or action identified in Step 1. Include in your case stories the characteristics you identified in Steps 3 and 4 as well as some aspects of daily life.

Give special attention to comments from participants who have direct contact with the people you are trying to personify or may be one of them.

Making this process work for you

For simpler versions

- Create a limited number of group profiles and only use the most important characteristics (such as power, legitimacy, interests, relations, and positions).

For more advanced versions

- Create many group profiles and use many characteristics.

- Combine *Personification* with techniques described in *Information G.A.S.*
- During the exercise, discuss and record the views that participants express.
- Write a description for each group profile.
- Take more time to gather the information you need to complete the exercise.

Readings and links

FAO, Socioeconomic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Programme, Macro fieldbook, Tool #6 (A15), http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga/4_en.htm