

PARTICIPATION IN NATURAL HAZARD MANAGEMENT BETWEEN POLITICAL PROGRAMMATIC AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

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INTRODUCTION

Participation of the public in decision-making processes in political and environmental planning has been growing in importance, particularly for complex and controversial projects. Constantly changing ecological, economical and social conditions mobilise the increasingly individualised society in making its voices heard in public decision-making. Current political discourses concerning the planning of large-scale projects (e.g. Stuttgart 21, the extension of the airports in Frankfurt/Main and Vienna) show that a representative system of public decision-making based on legally specified participation standards is no longer sufficient to satisfy public's demand for transparency and involvement. Natural hazard management is also confronted with this challenge. The current literature, for instance, increasingly stresses the need to involve actively the local knowledge of the population during the production of danger zone maps. Here, participation is not only the ultimate result of democratic culture in itself; it is actually an appropriate instrument to improve the quality of planning and strengthen the legitimacy of planning in the society. In this context, the relevant question is no longer why participation is important or meaningful, but rather which of the desired political goals can be achieved using appropriate participation strategies at the local level.

DEEL – GOALS OF PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING PROCESSES

When designing a participation process in regard to environmental planning projects the basic question is what participation-related goals derived from the literature or political discourse should be achieved in a local participation process. We distinguish the following fundamental categories that help to provide an answer to this question.

1. *Democratisation*: The discursive interaction process should activate a learning process among the participating actors and lead to a better understanding of actors' own responsibility. The latter plays a crucial role in the case of natural hazard management.
2. *Effectiveness and efficiency*: An early involvement of stakeholders in an interactive process enables them to bring in their local knowledge and opinions and discuss them in order to avoid or solve conflicts. As a result, the quality of decisions, as well as their implementation, can be improved.
3. *Legitimation*: Provided that the results of the participatory process are taken seriously and considered in the superior formal procedures (e.g. final plan approval), a balanced and timely participation of stakeholders enhances the degree of acceptance of the plans in society and provides additional justification for official planning activities in general.

The DEEL System offers the opportunity to develop appropriate participation strategies and is useable to evaluate running and even finished participation processes.

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DEEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

The directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks requires in Article 10 an active involvement of interested parties but leaves a significant room for interpretation by member states. Therefore, the Bavarian Water Authority asked the Chair of Forest and Environmental Policy to develop a concept for a participatory risk management process. Here, the DEEL was used, to define the appropriate level of participation. The Authority's main objective is to promote a greater understanding for the own responsibility especially of the actors municipalities and civil protection organisations (*democratisation*). On the other hand, there is the fear that the planned goals and measures are not implemented by the responsible actors (*efficiency*). Due to these objectives, a participation of the interested parties on the level of decision-making was recommended. The biggest challenge hereby is to actively involve local actors like majors and representatives of fire brigades, farmer organisations, NGOs, etc, which all have their knowledge on a very concrete level, without loosing the more abstract catchments approach of the directive. The concept, therefore, recommends that regional actors like representatives from the 16 planning regions or the counties are going to develop fitting risk reduction goals for the 56 Bavarian planning districts (size: min. 4 - Ø 31 - max 77 municipalities) in externally moderated flood conferences. The mentioned local actors are responsible for the elaboration of self-binding mitigation measures within flood conferences on sub-basins basis (size: equals counties; ca. 10-12 municipalities).

The high value of mountain forests for the protection of populated mountain areas and for human activity in these areas has been recognised in land use regulations in all Alpine countries. Nevertheless, the implementation of specific measures to improve mountain forests' protective functions often faces a lack of understanding and resistance at the local level. In order to address this problem, Austria has set up a "protection forest platform" in 2002, as an umbrella organisation for the local "protection forest partner communities". The goal is to create a broad cooperative alliance of stakeholders for the improvement and preservation of the protective functions of forests (*legitimation*) and to enhance the mutual adjustment and reconciliation of interests of various users and stakeholders of protection forests (*effectiveness and efficiency*). The State of Bavaria also attempts to encourage and intensify the participation of forest owners and the general public within the so-called Mountain Forest Offensive, in order to strengthen the appreciation and acceptance of the increasing forest conversion (*legitimation*). Therefore, forest owners, official authorities and representatives of other forest users (e.g. farmers and tourism organisations) are invited to participate in "Mountain Forest Panels" to develop and to discuss silvicultural, hunting, and other measures in order to facilitate efficient joint implementation (*efficiency*). The INTERREG project „Schutzwaldplattformen und -foren in Tirol und Bayern" recognized significant differences between countries and municipalities, in the way they implement participation. By using the DEEL system to evaluate these strategies it turns out that the responsible foresters sometimes had problems to develop a fitting participatory process taking into account their own goals and the interests and power of the relevant actors. They often underestimated the complexity to organize a participatory process due to their more technical education.

CONCLUSION

The choice and implementation of a participation strategy that corresponds to the selected goals requires a lot of effort from the responsible agencies. On the one hand, there is the possibility to use external expertise as recommended in the case of the floods directive in Bavaria. On the other hand, a capacity building process within the agencies is reasonable taking into account the increasing role of managing conflicting interests in natural hazard management. Therefore, the partners of the INTERREG project designed and implemented a series of training seminars for the staff of the forest service of both countries. Additionally, it would be helpful to install participation experts within the agencies, who could provide support to the responsible staff on the local and regional level.

Keywords: participation, goals, flood directive, protection forest, management, planning