



Case studies on public participation

A marine nature park in the Arcachon lagoon



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Framework : Aarhus convention and French environmental legislation

A natural marine park is a tool for integrated management of a marine area established by the act 334 of April 14, 2006 French legislation.

act 334-3 : « Ministerial decree establishing a nature marine park is done after a public participation pursuant to chapter III (title II – book 1st) of the environmental French legislation. It sets the boundaries of the park, the composition of the management council and management guidelines »

3 vocations :

- Knowledge
- Protection of natural heritage
- Sustainable development

1 local management council

Combining the different stakeholders,
no majority of a group



Marine & maritime environment

- Fluid environment
- Strong interconnection between areas

- Mode of public ownership different from terrestrial area
- « absolute freedom » (recreational use)

Coastal and marine area until now

- No property
- Granting of area by state

- State only decision maker
- No local integrated management

- Same space for multiple uses
- Three dimensional space

- The definition of a territorial project is different for terrestrial or marine areas
- Public participation in decision making is new



Implementation for the public participation in decision making

Step 4
Final decision making
By ministries

Step 3
First decision making

- Collection public comments
- Collection institution comments



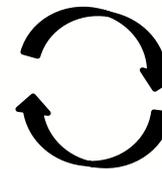
Step 2
Marine area project

- Management guidelines
- Boundaries
- Management council

Step 1
Territorial diagnostic

Heritage issues and economics

Sharing results with public
→ Upgrade the knowledge



Public participation



Arcachon lagoon : nature heritage and economics issues

Nature heritage :

- natural habitat and species of international interest
- rich and productive environment



Economics issues

- Maritime territory more and more artificialized
- Permanent and secondary populations strongly growing
- Mariculture, fishing and nautical industries, pillar of the economy, in trouble
- Alternative : summer tourism ?



Results

Collective discussions benefited environmental ambition of the project

First stage of public participation

- Sectorial expression of opinion
- Fear of coercion and interdictions for the only purpose of nature conservation
- Difficulty of engaging actors of some terrestrial activities when impact of watershed on the marine environment is known
- Difficulty of engaging public individual people because there is no personal interest in the sense of land property

Last stage of public participation

- Development of an integrating vision among stakeholders to exit from the sectorial one (*environmental impact assessment opens the vision of stakeholders to environmental connection but not a integrating reflection*)
- Opening a pluralistic dialogue about the place of nature (*subject not reserved on environmental organisation*)



Strength and good practices

- Definition of the marine nature park project is limited in time, which requires finding the balance between sufficient public participation and decision making
- In the experience related there, the public participation focus on « what kind of future would you want for marine area to combine nature conservation and sustainable development » and not « do you agree with this project ? ». It's a new and good practice



Weaknesses and risks

- taking in account of the outcomes public participation should be easier in the experiment reported because participation was strong during the consultation. The opinions expressed were homogeneous and already discussed.
- Conversely, if the public doesn't feel involved and give their view at the end, they may be many different opinions and final decision may be difficult to make and public acceptance too.
- development of a participative public steps in political practices should make them more acceptable by authorities



Unresolved issues

- No debate with young. Modes of governance are not known and civic young engagement is very shy in our time.
- Limited means available for project developers to help actors in participating. Beyond the means, there is the habit of the public consultation process. It must remain on a voluntary basis but it requires time.
- How to ensure the dialogue will continue to mid-term ? (after the decision was taken, at its implemented).
- Will these new modes of prior public consultation allow ambitious choices for environment or lead to reduce them?



Suggestions

Following comments are related to national implementation of Convention and not to the Convention itself

Discussion and decision must appear the costs/benefits to mid and long terms (cost and benefits on nature, on economics)

Extend information brought to the attention of the public and information processed by an environmental impact assessment of a project to all disciplinary fields –often, physical environment or birds are considered but not ecosystem performance or common biodiversity.

Define a dead line of implementation of a project after a public participation – on contrary, public ownership of a collective project will go out or context must change.

Legalize means of public information in deciding making via web. Choices and decisions should be more explained and disseminated to public.



Thank you for your attention



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