



Participation in the implementation of Natura 2000: A comparative study of six EU member states



Marieke Blondet^{a,*}, Jessica de Koning^b, Lars Borrass^c, Francesca Ferranti^d, Maria Geitzenauer^e, Gerhard Weiss^e, Esther Turnhout^f, Georg Winkel^g

^a Laboratoire d'Etude des Ressources Forêt – Bois (LERFoB), AgroParisTech, INRA, 54000 Nancy, France and Associated Researcher, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, UMR 7206 Eco-anthropologie et ethnobiologie, Paris, France

^b Sociology and Anthropology of Development, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

^c Forest and Environmental Policy, Institute of Environmental Social Sciences and Geography, University of Freiburg, Germany

^d Nature & Society Consultancy in Research and Publishing, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

^e Institute of Forest, Environmental and Natural Resource Policy, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU), Austria & Central-East European Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFICEEC), Austria

^f Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

^g European Forest Institute, Forest for Society Research Programme, Yliopistokatu 6, 80100 Joensuu, Finland

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Nature conservation
Participatory processes
Impact
Legitimacy

ABSTRACT

The establishment of Natura 2000, the European Union's network of protected areas, has been a challenging process and has caused a variety of conflicts. These conflicts are related to contradictory stakeholder interests and perceptions, as well as to procedural issues and feelings of exclusion, especially by concerned local land user groups. To prevent further conflict, local participation has been stressed as an important tool to increase the inclusiveness of Natura 2000 and its acceptance among land users. In this paper, we present an analysis of participation practices related to the Natura 2000 implementation processes in six EU member states. Based on material collected from semi-structured interviews and document analysis, we describe the organisational settings of the participatory processes, focusing, among other things, on the type of participants involved, the level and intensity of their involvement, and the goal of participation. In addition, we also describe the local context in which the participation processes have been embedded. Finally, we assess the outcomes of the participatory processes in terms of their impact on forest and nature conservation management practices. Our results show that local participation practices were shaped not just by the Natura 2000 policy, but also by the history of the area, including, for example, earlier conflicts among the local actors. We also show that although the participation process leads to a greater acceptance of the Natura 2000 policy, this does not relate to significant changes in management practices among local actors. These findings, however, do not suggest that participation is irrelevant. Rather, we conclude that participation involves context-dependent, localised learning processes that can only be understood by taking the historical socio-economic and institutional context in which they are situated into account.

1. Introduction

The European Habitats Directive (HD), including the provisions for the establishment of the Natura 2000 network of protected sites, was approved in 1992. Today, the Natura 2000 network roughly covers 18% of the EU's territory and many consider both the HD and Natura 2000 network as a unique, innovative and ambitious supranational policy (Rosa and Marques Da Silva, 2005; Fulchiron, 2004). The main goal of Natura 2000 is the conservation of natural habitats and species of community interest through the maintenance or restoration of a

favourable conservation status. Natura 2000 also aims at contributing to the sustainable development of rural territories in the European Union (European Commission, 1992). Hence, Natura 2000 targets both conservation and the integration of environmental and socio-economic concerns by taking “economic, social and cultural requirements, and regional and local characteristics” into account (European Commission, 1992: 6). The implementation of Natura 2000 has, however, been characterised by conflicts and delays in many countries (Fernandez, 2003; Ferranti et al., 2010; Grodzinska-Jurczak and Cent, 2011; Hiedanpää, 2005; Ledoux et al., 2000; McCauley, 2008; Young et al.,

* Corresponding author at: Laboratoire d'Economie Forestière INRA AgroParisTech, 14, rue Girardet, 54042 Nancy Cedex, France.
E-mail addresses: marieke.blondet@nancy.inra.fr (M. Blondet), Georg.Winkel@efi.int (G. Winkel).

2007). These conflicts are usually related to different and competing land use principles, interests, and views on conservation often resulting from issues such as feelings of exclusion by land users (Winkel et al., 2015).

Regarding the implementation of Natura 2000, EU member states have adopted different approaches with widely varying degrees of local actor involvement (Rauschmayer et al., 2009a, 2009b). UE member states are relatively free to design the implementation process and the management of the protected sites in line with the overall objectives of the policy. The HD actually leaves member states with considerable leeway as to how they can meet the goals of the directive which has opened the possibility of participatory approaches to the implementation of Natura 2000. Whereas the selection of sites to be included in the network has been strongly driven by conservation science in all of the countries involved (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Ferranti et al., 2013), subsequent phases of the network implementation, including the development of management concepts and strategies, have increasingly promoted stakeholder participation (Bouwma et al., 2010). This shift towards a more participatory environmental governance in the implementation of the Habitats Directive mirrors broader shifts in environmental governance in Europe instilled by EU policies (see Andonova, 2004; Saurugger, 2010; Sotirov et al., 2015). Participation in environmental governance, in general, and Natura 2000 implementation, more specifically, is argued to be a good way to lead to a more effective and legitimate policy in the eyes of local populations (Dimitrakopoulos et al., 2010; Koontz and Thomas, 2006; Luz, 2000; Newig and Fritsch, 2009; Rauschmayer et al., 2009a, 2009b). Yet, the actual contribution of the adoption of more participatory approaches to the outcomes of the European conservation policy in terms of both stakeholder acceptance and effectiveness is still in debate (Turnout et al., 2015).

A large body of literature addresses the challenges and obstacles of Natura 2000 implementation (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Fairbrass and Jordan, 2001; Fernandez, 2003; Ferranti et al., 2010; Grodzinska-Jurczak and Cent, 2011; Hiedanpää, 2005; Ledoux et al., 2000; Young et al., 2007) and discusses the issue of participation in Natura 2000 and, more broadly, in European biodiversity policy (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2010; Paavola, 2004; Rauschmayer et al., 2009a, 2009b). However, the question of how participation relates to the implementation of nature conservation objectives into practice, and how this plays off in the interplay with local stakeholders and their social and economic concerns, is less specifically discussed (Winter et al., 2014; Winkel et al., 2015). This paper intends to shed light on the dynamics and effects of local participation processes in the implementation of Natura 2000 in general and the designation of nature areas for Natura 2000 in particular. It does so by systematically exploring participatory approaches used in the implementation of Natura 2000 in forest areas across six case studies in six different European countries. The aim of this paper is to draw conclusions on the relation between participatory approaches of Natura 2000 and acceptance and effectiveness of policy.

2. Participation and the governance of nature conservation

For a long time, human intervention has been largely portrayed as a potential threat to conservation, and the idea of separating humans and nature was deeply rooted in the global conservation movement (Colchester, 1994). However, this paradigm began to change from the 1970s on, and the relationship between people and nature was increasingly taken into consideration. Voices emerged arguing that the integration of the human dimension into nature conservation and management practices is significant and necessary (Wells et al., 1992; Wells and McShane, 2004). This change was also central to the international shift in conservation science during the 1990s that led to ecological theories that considered human activities as one of the elements contributing to the equilibrium and integrity of natural ecosystems (Larrère and Larrère, 1997, 2009). This resulted in the

widespread adoption of community-based conservation and participatory natural resource management schemes, which combined ecological, social and economic objectives (Dressler et al., 2010; Maier et al., 2014).

Participatory approaches are now considered to be a “key element in reviving confidence in the State” (Abram and Cowell, 2004, pp. 701), and are expected to improve the decisions taken in conservation and development projects and policies (Barnaud, 2013; Cornwall, 2008). This is, among other things, because participation makes it possible to address complex environmental issues in a more inclusive, locally-adapted way instead of via centralised, “distant” bureaucracies (Koontz and Thomas, 2006). The participation of stakeholders and citizens may provide valuable local information and expertise that improves the quality and effectiveness of policies (Bulkeley and Mol, 2003). In the case of conservation, participation can, for example, facilitate the integration of tangible local knowledge about species, habitats and their conservation status (Young et al., 2013). Moreover, participatory processes are expected to provide decisions with greater legitimacy and acceptance, thus easing their implementation (Koontz and Thomas, 2006; Luz, 2000; Newig and Fritsch, 2009). Lastly, it is expected that repeated participatory processes result in trustful relationships between the public and government bureaucrats (King and Stivers, 1998), thereby facilitating future decision-making processes.

Concomitant with these positive expectations, the literature also describes numerous challenges related to participation. Notably, its contribution to principles such as the legitimacy and effectiveness of a policy is not self-evident. Participatory processes can lead to a disproportionate emphasis on individual issues or particular interests (Dietz and Stern, 2008; Renn, 2008; Sanders, 1997), which may alter its legitimacy in the eyes of people with alternative interests. Moreover, participation may not increase the effectiveness of policy implementation, especially not if substantial conflicts are prevalent (Newig and Fritsch, 2009). It may be “misused” as a purely symbolic appeasement strategy in polarised environmental disputes (Winkel and Sotirov, 2011), and can even increase conflicts (Walker and Hurley, 2004).

This may suggest that the merits of participation do not reside in the method of participation itself but are profoundly shaped by the practices in which participatory approaches are performed (Turnhout et al., 2010; Van der Arend and Behagel, 2011; Behagel and Van den Arend, 2013). Therefore, it is relevant to move away from either design approaches to participation that aim to find the optimal participatory approach, or approaches that see participation as a form of repression (Turnhout et al., 2010). Rather we should aim at uncovering the practices (intended and unintended) of public involvement in environmental decision-making to assess participation in practice.

3. Methodological approach

Participation can be defined in different ways and participatory approaches can be classified with regard to different dimensions (Arnstein, 1969; Fiorino, 1990; Pretty, 1995; Van Asselt and Rijkens-Klomp, 2002). Building upon the argumentation on the relevance of practices in which participation are performed and the environmental scope of the research, we choose an approach by Dietz and Stern (2008). This approach was, firstly, developed to analyse environmental assessment and decision making. This aim of the approach makes it relevant for explaining the policy processes of Natura 2000. Secondly, the participatory approach looks at the direct involvement of the public in decision making and the practice of participation. Finally and by identifying several key dimensions of participation, the approach offers the possibility to assess “public participation processes across a large range of types of agency activities” (Dietz and Stern, 2008, pp 14). This final reason makes the approach by Dietz and Stern (2008) particularly relevant for the different cases selected for this article.

Dietz and Stern (2008, pp. 11) broadly define participation as “organized processes adopted by elected officials, government agencies,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6460954>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6460954>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)