



Citizens' self-mobilization, motivational factors, and the group of most engaged citizens: The case of a radioactive waste repository in Denmark

Ivar Lyhne^{a,*}, Sara Bjørn Aaen^a, Helle Nielsen^b, Lone Kørnøv^a, Sanne Vammen Larsen^b

^a Aalborg University, Rendsburggade 14, Room, 9000 Aalborg, Denmark

^b Aalborg University, AC Meyers Vænge 15, 2450 Copenhagen SW, Denmark



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Citizen self-mobilisation
Motivational factors
Social movements
Citizens
Participation
Fire souls
Radioactive waste
Denmark

ABSTRACT

Citizens' self-mobilization has received considerable attention in literature on land use policy and environmental politics. Involved in this mobilization process is a group of highly engaged citizens, which are known by a variety of names in literature and acknowledged for their role in policymaking. To better understand this group of policy actors, the paper investigates the motivational factors that lead this group of citizens to invest numerous hours in policymaking. The case of the planning process of a radioactive waste repository in Denmark is used, since this topic is a well-known policy struggle in many countries. Bringing together theoretical insight into motivational factors, empirical data from a nationwide questionnaire, and interviews with a selected group of highly engaged citizens, the study shows that the most engaged citizens have a distinct set of motivational factors dominated by their perception of unfairness, collective identity, and knowledge of the case.

1. Introduction

Citizens' self-mobilization (as defined by Pretty, 1995)¹ and local community groups are widely acknowledged as playing an important role in the making and implementation of present and future land use policies (e.g., Davies, 2008; Cain and Nelson, 2013). Professional and academic interest in understanding what drives citizens to engage in community groups and self-mobilization activities has led to a wide range of studies in different research disciplines and sectors, focusing on both established social movements and more spontaneous forms of citizen mobilization (e.g., Wright and Boudet, 2012; Leach and Scoones, 2007).

Community groups and citizens' self-mobilization seem in many cases to be organized by a minor group of citizens who are highly engaged in community matters (e.g., Campbell, 2013; Applegate, 1998). These small circles of perennial figures, who invest a significant amount of voluntary work in specific matters, are known by a number of names, such as 'fire souls' (e.g., Blomqvist, 2004) and 'usual suspects' (e.g., Colvin et al., 2016; Involve and Together We Can, 2005). These types of 'most engaged citizens' are explicitly acknowledged as being important actors in stakeholder management approaches within the field of land use policies (e.g., Blomqvist, 2004; Andersson et al., 2008).

Whereas there is significant literature on what motivates citizens to

engage in social movements and policy processes (e.g., Bate et al., 2004; Wright and Boudet, 2012; Pinard, 2011), pointing toward a 'multitude of underlying motivations' (Wolsink, 2000, p. 57), we have found no studies that specifically investigate motivational factors of the group of the most engaged citizens in community groups and social movements — despite their considerable effort and importance. We use insight from political science, sociology and social psychology to develop an analytical framework for the study of the most engaged. Empirically, we use a survey and interviews to shed light on why citizens engage. The research question guiding the analysis is as follows: What motivational factors make the most engaged citizens invest numerous hours in decision making?

To explore the motivational factors of the most engaged citizens, we have chosen the decision-making process regarding the handling of radioactive waste from the decommissioning of the nuclear research facility located in the eastern part of Denmark. Radioactive waste management is generally characterized as a highly complex socio-technical and managerial problem (Kraft et al., 1993; Kemp and O'Riordan, 1988) that is part of the competing interests in land use (Evans et al., 2009), and has become a source of conflict in many countries (Fischer and Boehnke, 2004; Wärmbäck et al., 2013; Yli-Kauhaluoma and Hänninen, 2014). Citizens' reactions to policies and plans for waste infrastructure have received considerable conceptual

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: lyhne@plan.aau.dk (I. Lyhne), sara@plan.aau.dk (S.B. Aaen), helle@plan.aau.dk (H. Nielsen), Lonek@plan.aau.dk (L. Kørnøv), Sannevl@plan.aau.dk (S.V. Larsen).

¹ We refer to the definition by Pretty (1995, p. 1252): 'People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilization can spread if government and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilization may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.'

and empirical attention (Rootes and Leonard, 2009; Rootes, 2009; Khoo and Rau, 2009; Botetzagias and Karamichas, 2009; McCauley, 2009; Wolsink and Devilee, 2009). Furthermore, within the field of radioactive waste management, the most engaged citizens are mentioned as a specific group of influential actors with regard to the success of the process of engaging civil society (OECD Nuclear Energy Agency, 2011). The Danish decision-making process is a case of spontaneous forms of citizen self-mobilization in potentially affected areas, each led by a small group of highly engaged individuals.

Our study of the most engaged citizens aims to contribute to the field of land use policy by exploring the motivations of the group of the most engaged persons, which appear to be a key driver in citizens' self-mobilization. Despite the special characteristics of long-lived radioactive waste, the findings on motivations of the most engaged persons are of interest to the study of the making and implementation of land use policies as well as to the study of the formation and evolution of citizen groups in policy and planning processes.

The article is structured as follows: first, the Danish decision-making process regarding nuclear waste is outlined. Second, an overview of research on the most engaged citizens and motivational factors is presented, followed by a description of the methods applied to study the Danish case. Then, the findings on the motivational factors are presented and discussed in terms of their contribution to land use policy literature.

2. The repository and citizens' self-mobilization

With famous physicist Niels Bohr as one of the key driving forces, Denmark decided to establish a research center for nuclear power in the mid-1950s (Kjems, 2013). In 1971, a power distribution company decided to establish the first nuclear power plant, but, due to a massive social movement against nuclear power in Denmark in the 1970s, it was never actualized. Later, in 1985, Parliament decided to reject all plans regarding nuclear power plants and allow only the continuation of nuclear research facilities, which consisted of three small scale research reactors (Karnøe and Buchhorn, 2009). Sixteen years later, in 2001, the last nuclear reactor was shut down and the decommissioning process started. In 2003, Danish Parliament also gave its consent to the government to prepare the basis for a final repository for low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste (GEUS and Danish Decommissioning, 2015).

The radioactive waste to be decommissioned included building materials from nuclear facilities, discarded radioactive sources, and technical equipment. The total amount of low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste amounted to 5–10,000 cubic meters. In addition, 233 kg of high-level radioactive waste consisting of irradiated fuel is to be decommissioned (GEUS and Danish Decommissioning, 2015).

In 2009, the Danish Government initiated a process of managing the waste through three options: A) Exporting the waste to a country with an existing repository; B) Establishing an intermediate repository in Denmark; or C) Establishing a final repository in Denmark. In 2011, a cross-ministerial working group presented 22 potential locations for a final repository; in 2012, these were reduced to six possible locations. In 2014, an environmental assessment of the plans for the final repository was conducted (Ministry of Health and Prevention, 2014). No documents were presented on the status of the export or on the intermediate repository options. At the time of submitting this manuscript no final decision is made on the radioactive waste deposit.

As a reaction to what some citizens perceived to be a non-transparent process, citizens mobilized in each of the five geographical areas that were appointed as a possible location (two of the possible locations were in the same geographical area). They had similar slogans, like 'Nuclear waste – no thanks,' and organized themselves through social media, email lists, and webpages.² The citizen opposition groups

worked together across the country to prevent the nuclear waste from being located in any of the selected localities. The five citizen groups were widely supported in the local areas, which is indicated by the fact that 53,000 individuals signed a petition against the nuclear project arranged by the citizen groups. All five citizen groups were headed by local steering committees consisting of 3–7 highly engaged citizens who were very active among other initiatives. The committees held independent hearings, involved the media, collected independent knowledge by involving external international experts, which they continuously published in an online newspaper, and met with the responsible ministry on several occasions. The most engaged citizens thus played a decisive role in mobilizing and organizing the opposition in all of the five geographical localities.

3. The most engaged citizens and motivational factors

This section presents an overview of understandings on 'the most engaged citizens' and motivational factors. The aims are to guide the analysis and provide a point of departure for interpreting the data and discussing the results.

3.1. A variety of understandings of the most engaged citizens

The literature on citizens who spend much time and energy on specific matters is found in planning literature, governance literature, political science literature, and business literature (e.g., Cain and Nelson, 2016; Karabeg et al., 2014; Sharir and Lerner, 2006). The different paradigms have given the most engaged citizens a variety of names and descriptions, of which a few will be presented here.

Management literature often uses the term 'change agents' when referring to the group of people who often play significant roles in creating and implementing changes in organizations (see overviews in Caldwell, 2003; Ottaway, 1983). McDermott et al. (2013) outline how change agents react to, translate and contribute to policy change initiatives. The term 'change agent' has also been applied in governance literature outlining how individuals may change planning practice (e.g., Kørnøv et al., 2011) and play an important role in land management (White, 2001). With its focus on organizational development this set of literature seems relevant for understanding motivation stemming from expectations for achievements.

The term 'usual suspects' is used in planning and participatory guidelines (e.g., *Involve and Together We Can*, 2005; Applegate, 1998). Usual suspects are described as 'people who habitually give time and effort to what they see as their civic responsibilities' (*Involve and Together We Can*, 2005, p. 35). Campbell (2013, p. 36) hypothesizes that the motivations for 'usual suspects' to participate in politics are to be found in a set of individual characteristics, including educational level, religious attendance, political knowledge, political 'conviction,' and a sense of civic duty, as well as in a set of social characteristics such as roles in social networks. This set of literature seems relevant for understanding the structural factors related to motivation and engagement as well as the moral obligations.

In the northern part of Europe, the most engaged citizens are called 'fire souls' (e.g., Blomqvist, 2004; Nocon et al., 2004), emphasizing their distinct dedication and tireless effort. A Danish study of fire souls (Hvilshøj and Vesterløkke, 2011) found that the 'fire' in fire souls was ignited at an early age by feeling passion and taking responsibility. The study found that fire souls, by nature, have an optimistic approach to problems and are quick to recover from disappointment. This set of literature seems relevant for understanding the passion of most engaged citizens.

Wall (1999), among others, uses the terms 'political entrepreneurs' and 'activist entrepreneurs' for citizens outside formal social movement organizations who, without salary, invest effort in influencing policy-making. Wall describes how this group of citizens network with other activists to acquire resources and exploit structural opportunities.

² Examples of webpages: <http://morads.dk>; <http://www.123hjemmeside.dk/t19/3645991>; <http://www.atomaffald.dk>; <http://lollandmodatomaffald.weebly.com/>

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6546679>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6546679>

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