



Local participation in cultural landscape maintenance: Lessons from Sweden

Marie Stenseke*

Department of Human and Economic Geography, Göteborg University, P.O. Box 630, SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 September 2007

Received in revised form 23 January 2008

Accepted 27 January 2008

Keywords:

Local participation

Cultural landscape

Seminatural grasslands

Landscape management and planning

Nature conservation

ABSTRACT

Local participation has evolved as a strategy in the conservation and maintenance of biological and cultural values in cultural landscapes. The meaning(s) of the concept, however, are fuzzy, and conditions for fruitful implementation have only been investigated to a limited extent. In this article, a couple of Swedish cases serve as points of departure for a better understanding of the prerequisites and critical aspects as regards an increased local involvement in landscape management. A review of research on community participation reveals some essential aspects; power relations, participants, the institutional framework, organisation, communication, knowledge building, monitoring and contextual factors. These aspects have formed the structure for the analysis of two cases within which local involvement is considered successful; Southern Öland, where community involvement in seminatural grassland management has been experienced in LIFE-projects and in the process of becoming a UNESCO World heritage site, and Mälardalen, an integrated restoration and beef production project carried out in close collaboration with farmers. The results are discussed in terms of successful ingredients, counterproductive aspects and operational difficulties. The findings show that trust, communication and local influence are vital ingredients in a participatory approach. Communication and co-management are pointed out as central areas of competence for executives working with landscape management and planning. There are, however, collisions between directives concerning nature conservation and directives concerning public participation. For successful local involvement, the subject for collaboration has to be broadly defined. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on collaboration in participatory approaches demands that democratic aspects have to be considered.

© 2008 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

How should the management of certain qualities in the cultural landscape be organised in terms of strategical planning and decision making? While nature resource management has traditionally been characterised by top-down perspectives, the buzzword these days is participation, as is seen in its influence upon policies concerning the cultural landscape. The potential and accuracy of involving local people in landscape management and planning is explicitly expressed in both the *Convention on biodiversity* (1991), the *European landscape convention* (Council of Europe, 2000) and the *Aarhus convention* (UNECE, 1998). Participatory approaches have been applied to landscape management and planning in many areas (see e.g. Hilts, 1997; Baker, 2000; Berkes et al., 1998; Buch and Hoverman, 2000; O'Riordan and Stoll-Kleemann, 2002; Selman, 2004). However, the meaning(s) and implications of local participation in relation to landscape need further investigation and vital questions still to be illuminated are: what are the prerequisites

for participation in landscape management? Which critical aspects should be considered?

In Sweden, the fact that the greatest threats to values attributed to the cultural landscape are the decreasing number of farmers, and the afforestation of fields and pastures, has fuelled an awareness within the Swedish political and administrative system of the need to construct landscape management strategies that are perceived by farmers and would-be farmers as being both positive and stimulating. Most of the agricultural land in the country is privately owned, and contains common goods such as biodiversity, cultural heritage and recreational space (the right of public access in Sweden allows anyone to walk on private land that is not cultivated or a garden). These values are mostly maintained in the context of ordinary farming, particularly that of animal husbandry and grazing. In the Rural Development Programme for Sweden 2007–2013, within the Common agriculture policy (CAP), 75% of the budget is allocated to the preservation and development of designated landscape values (Ministry of Agriculture, 2007). In the promotion of an efficient implementation of the necessary measures, local involvement is a key strategy within the program. However, ways and means of implementing this participatory approach are only vaguely described.

* Tel.: +46 31 786 13 89; fax: +46 31 786 13 98.

E-mail address: marie.stenseke@geography.gu.se.

The fact that local involvement has been staked out as a goal within nature conservation strategies and landscape policies indicates that there is a gap between the landscape management decision-making level and the local contexts within which biological and cultural heritage qualities are inevitably integral parts. A number of scholars have drawn attention to the need to reconsider the top-down order in landscape management and planning (e.g. Murdoch et al., 1994; Nassauer, 1997; Ó Cinnéide, 1999). In his article, “A look at the political geography of environmental management”, Hägerstrand (1995) points to the growing distances between those who formulate management strategies, based on scientific knowledge, and those who are requested to act in the physical landscape. Harrison and Burgess (2000) describe landscape management in the developed world as being based upon an expert-led approach, and argue that this approach has displaced, rather than added to, the local knowledge of nature. Similarly, in their study of landscape policies in six European countries, Pinto-Correia et al. (2006) remark that policy making follows top-down guidelines, including classification systems in which the local relationship between people and their landscape is not taken into account. To discuss and describe an issue using words, figures and pictures is quite a different matter from real activity in fields and pastures. In order to overcome this problem, Hägerstrand (1995) states that management must inevitably be based on an understanding of how macro and micro aspects are connected. According to Olsson (2003), ecosystem management cannot be either local or central, but requires multilevel management and the matching of social and ecological scales. Selman (2004), who discusses the collaboration between local communities in the planning and management of cultural landscapes, maintains that it is not possible to sustain the “intimate interaction between communities and land” by government intervention alone. It could rather be said that the interaction relies upon continued community input. If land managers are to be motivated, measures must draw upon existing social infrastructures and networks in an area. Thackway and Olsson (1999) claim that the integration of community aspirations for biodiversity conservation with the sustainable use of natural resources in the regional context is a viable way of ensuring the long-term maintenance of ecological functions and services, and that the involvement of stakeholders at landscape level will be regarded as being more legitimate by the wider community.

A parallel could be drawn with results from research on the co-management of common pool resources (CPR). In her research overview, Zachrisson (2004) identifies a number of advantages of increased public involvement; the reduction of conflicts, a more flexible and efficient management, increased legitimacy, an implied better use of place-specific knowledge etc. In the wake of the quest for participatory approaches, a number of concepts e.g. adaptive co-management (Folke et al., 2003; Olsson, 2003), common good framework (Harrison and Burgess, 2000) and public ecology (Robertson and Hull, 2003), have been launched in order to better handle the issue theoretically as well as in practice.

As noted above, local participation appears to be a promising strategy for landscape management and planning. The understandings and conceptualisations of “local participation”, however, cover a very wide spectrum in terms of power relations and local people’s levels of influence. The term has been used to describe anything from information, a one-way communication between government agencies and locals about policies and regulations, to citizen control, in the sense that all management power is delegated to the local community (cf. Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995; De Paoli, 1999; OECD, 2001; Zachrisson, 2004). Pimbert and Pretty (1997) describe a range of possible forms of local participation in landscape management:

- *Minimal participation* that consists of information or consultation. External agents define both problems and solutions, without any obligations to modify them according to people’s responses.
- *Participation for material incentives* in which people participate by providing resources such as labour or access, in return for material incentives.
- *Interactive participation* where people participate in a joint analysis. This leads to action plans, an enhancement of social and institutional capacity and increased local control.
- *Self-mobilization* in which local people take initiatives independent of external institutions.

However, it is important to stress that there is no one correct means of participation, and local power should not be seen as positive per se. According to Selman (2004), the main question that has to be asked in every single case is how to get the best results from limited government resources. A pertinent issue for discussion is whether participation actually contributes to sustainability? Local involvement is not to be regarded as a simple solution without complications. The concept has to be contextualised and analysed using the questions; why? how? and for whom? Furthermore, the difficulties and consequences of increased local influence have to be elucidated and discussed. An apparent problem is that local participation is time-consuming and costly. Selman’s results indicate that local participation in the management of cultural landscapes is very efficient when the focus is set on specific areas and landscape qualities. It cannot, however, replace the political and administrative organisation when it comes to comprehensive strategies for large-scale areas (Selman, 2004). Critique raised against research concerning local involvement in managing CPR also give some hints about pitfalls when launching local participation; prejudiced assumptions that local communities are small units with a homogeneous population, an ignorance of power relations between local groups or individuals and a strong focus on how to facilitate communicative processes leading to a neglect of underlying major factors and central dynamics such as population change, technical development and the market (Zachrisson, 2004, cf. Svarstad et al., 2006). Imprudent implementation of local participation might cause conflicts in the local society, with long-term effects upon relations and the local capacity to collaborate.

Aims and objectives

The overall objective of this article is to enhance knowledge about the prerequisites for local participation in the planning and management of cultural landscapes, and to reveal critical aspects that have to be considered when introducing participatory strategies into landscape management and planning. More specifically, the aim is to get a better understanding of what are the success factors but also to acknowledge problems and hindrances. Focus is set upon the collaboration between farmers and official executives dealing with landscape management and planning. In the article, some Swedish experiences are presented and analysed; the processes around landscape management and planning on Öland, and the integrated biodiversity restoration – beef production project Målarhagar. Both have been recognised as good examples of landscape management that includes local involvement. The presentation is policy oriented, with the aim of providing knowledge for the further development of participatory approaches in landscape management and planning.

Contextualising local participation

The use of the terms “success” and “hindrances” as analytical concepts in the study necessitates an evaluation of the criteria

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/93569>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/93569>

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