



Local democracy implications for coastal zone management—A case study in southern Norway

Katrine Soma*, Arild Vatn

The Norwegian University of Life Sciences, The Department of Economics and Resource Management, P.Box 5003, 1432 Ås, Norway

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 July 2008

Accepted 9 October 2008

Keywords:

Public hearings

Public values

Coastal zone management

Local level

Stakeholder participation

Interest groups

Citizens

ABSTRACT

Stakeholder participation is frequently recommended to ensure that public values are taken into account in the decision-making processes. However, few attempts have been made to analyse the extent to which increasing stakeholder participation actually leads to better representation of the public values. The main aim of this study is to obtain more insights about reasons why the most frequently applied form of stakeholder participation, i.e. the public hearings, may fail in representing the general public views and values when applied at a local level. A case study was conducted on policy formulations and decision-making in the coastal zone on the island Flekkerøy in southern Norway. Local- and regional-public authorities contributed in in-depth interviews and with written documentation to inform about a comprehensive stakeholder participation process that took place in the early 1990s. The main findings include that landowner interests, and not public views and values, were legitimised during the participatory process because of: (1) the landowner's strong local social power among inhabitants, (2) the design of the participatory processes favouring the landowner interests, (3) the personal relations between local landowners and public managers, and (4) the low representation of public views and values due to a problem of scale, i.e. the NIMBY syndrome. Based on our experience, we recommend improving representation of public views by changing the frequently applied participatory processes to also include citizens in addition to interest groups and experts.

© 2008 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

On the international agenda, stakeholder participation is recommended for sustainable environmental management decisions as the best tool to handle concerns about public values, including environmental protection, social acceptability, economic viability and dependence security (including Post and Lundin, 1996; UNEP, 2004). Moreover, empowerment of local stakeholders is often seen as a best way to handle conflicts in the coastal zone (Hegarty, 1997; Clark et al., 1998; Davos, 1998). As a major task of coastal zone management, the EU (2003) recommends that stakeholder interests, roles and concerns should be assessed and analysed. Through participation, managers as well as stakeholders have the possibilities to learn, educate, build trust, gain legitimacy of decisions, and thus improve decision-making processes (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). It is insisted that the traditional top-down and *ad hoc* approach to coastal development has not worked, as it has resulted in confusion, conflicts and a lack of understanding among users (Hegarty, 1997). Thus, the needs for integrated coastal zone policies, based on

participatory approaches, are emphasised all over the world including Malaysia (Mokhtar and Ghani Aziz, 2003), Japan (Kawabe, 1998) and Scotland (Storrier and McGlashan, 2006).

Frequently, state reforms that have opened for a wider and deeper participation of citizens at local level have been implemented, i.e. the decentralization process of which resources, power and tasks are transferred to lower level authorities (Smith, 2003). Governance can be described as 'both a strong reform strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent, and more democratic' (Minogue, 1997).

Political participation may be interpreted as 'taking part of the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies' (Parry et al., 1992). Political participation can be motivated by enhancing the awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizens, holding elected representatives more accountable, or including the realm of direct action by starting with the articulation of grassroot needs and priorities and building popular forms of organisation (*ibid.*).

A tension exists between strategic- and deliberative-democracy, implying that a distinction can be made of democracy with voting, interest aggregation, constitutional rights and self-government

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +47 64965700; fax: +47 64965701.
E-mail address: katrine.soma@umb.no (K. Soma).

that involve interaction with coercion, manipulation or deception, and democracy with deliberation that involve interactions with persuasion (Dryzek, 2000). The concept of citizenship in the democratic theory has to some implied the rights of individual needs, whilst to others it is seen as a broader set of social and civic responsibilities (*ibid.*). Political participation is about power and involvements of different social actors (Parry et al., 1992). However, the control of the structure and processes for participation, defining actors, agendas, procedures and spaces for interaction between participants and the authorities, is usually in the hands of governmental institutions and can become a barrier for the participatory processes (*ibid.*).

Participation comprises a range of different methods (overviews can be found in, among others, Renn et al., 1995; Creighton et al., 1998; Toth, 2001; van Asselt and Rijkens-Klomp, 2002). Participants have been specified according to different roles they may take in the participatory processes. Interest groups, citizens and experts constitute three forms of knowledge; of which interest groups contribute with knowledge derived from social interests and advocacy, citizens contribute with knowledge based on common sense and personal experiences and experts contribute with knowledge based on technical expertise (Renn et al., 1993, p. 190).

The most frequently applied participatory approach applied to support local management with information about public interests is the *public hearing*, which have been criticized for being unfair and favouring participants with economies at stake at local level (Webler and Renn, 1995). Also in Norway the coastal zone management is formed with an intention to let all stakeholders be heard in public hearings to prepare for policy formulations (Buanes et al., 2004). The coastal zone decision-making is taken by local authorities, as they are delegated from national level. One of the main coastal zone management issues at the shore in Norway is the increasing building activity. More frequently now than earlier it is accepted that areas near the shore – the so-called 100-m zone – is used for purposes other than public access and recreation, which traditionally has been its main use (Arnesen and Stokke, 2003). A total of 2.4% of the coastal line changed from untouched areas to construction areas during the years 1985–2006, and the total area impacted by building activities is estimated to almost 40% of the total coast line (exclusive islands with no connection to mainland) (SSB, 2006). In 2007, a total of 1200 applications for building provisions in the coastal zone were reported (not all were reported by the municipalities to the regional offices), of which about 64% were accepted by the municipalities.

Although the *public hearing* is the most frequently applied participatory approach to support public management decisions with information about public interests, it is said to be one of the least studied forms of participation (Webler and Renn, 1995). The main aim of this study is to obtain more insights about reasons why the *public hearings* may fail in representing the general public views and values when applied at a local level. An island called Flekkerøy in southern Norway, connected to mainland with a tunnel, was selected as a good example to conduct a case study because the local policy makers had conducted comprehensive stakeholder participation processes in preparing for coastal zone policy formulations. Inhabitants of the island contributed in developing a municipality-plan in the years 1990–1995 (referred to as the Flekkerøy-plan). Based on this plan, the local inhabitants could apply for permissions to build in the coastal zone.

We particularly address the following research questions:

- How was stakeholder participation that supported the development of an area plan for Flekkerøy experienced?
- How were permissions to use the coastal zone for property development granted in practice? and
- What are the stakeholders' and public managers' perceptions of the current coastal zone management procedures?

The three research questions were addressed by collecting relevant locally published documentation and conducting in-depth interviews with inhabitants of the island and coastal zone managers, including the municipality administration and the Environmental county governor. With respect to the third research question, stakeholders and public managers were asked to reflect on organisational setting and effectiveness of management procedures, and particularly on the possibilities of using different types of stakeholder participation and/or regional versus local planning.

In this paper, we first present a description of the planning process that has taken place in Flekkerøy. Thereafter, the method applied is described before we address the main findings to the three research questions consecutively. After a discussion, we finally present the conclusions.

Description of the planning process in the southern Norway

The authorities with responsibilities for coastal zone management on Flekkerøy

In Norway, resources, power and tasks have been decentralized to lower level authorities, opened for a wider and deeper participation of inhabitants at local level. The main local decision-making authorities on coastal zone management in the Municipality where the island Flekkerøy is situated are the municipality administration (mainly the Building unit/Bygg avdelingen) and the local politicians. The public views and values are protected by the national law (the Norwegian Planning and Building Act of 1985, i.e. the PBA 85), and put into practice by several public authorities. The Environmental county governor (Fylkesmannen i Vest-Agder) at the regional level has authority to intervene in a decision-making process if conducted illegally or in high disadvantage to public views and values. The Environmental county governor should always be invited to participate during the hearing processes. The Regional outdoor council (Friluftsrådet), the Representative for young people (Representant for barn og unge) and the Municipality outdoor unit (Planavdelingen) also represent public views and values although their role is limited to give advice to local politicians. The Regional outdoor council is an organisation working exclusively on issues that regard recreation. Its board consists of selected local politicians. The Representative for young people belongs to the public educational management unit in the municipality and constitutes an important representative for public views and values in disputed coastal zone management cases. The Municipality outdoor unit works on coastal zone management issues at local level on a daily basis. Fig. 1 gives an overview of the main responsible for the coastal management on Flekkerøy.

A short description of the Flekkerøy-process

With reference to the law (PBA 85, §16-1), which insists that any affected groups or individuals should be given an opportunity to actively participate in the planning process, inhabitants on Flekkerøy and public officers contributed with a total of 7000 voluntary working hours during the years 1990–1995 (Anon., 1995) to develop a municipality-plan (referred to as the Flekkerøy-plan as it only covers the island and not the whole municipality). The participatory process was more comprehensive than required

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/93741>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/93741>

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