

The participation of stakeholders in planning the use of forest roads. The experience of Tenerife.

Summary

In this communication the use of forest planning on the island of Tenerife will be analysed. Sustainable forest planning implies the participation of stakeholder communities. In recent years the influx of people to the Islands' forest environment has notably increased, emerging conflicts between the users of forest tracks. Due to that, the Insular Council of Tenerife is working on a regulation on the uses of those pathways. This communication deals with both a framing analysis and the design and implementation of a participatory multi-criteria approach to explore together with the stakeholders possible alternatives related to the above mentioned forest planning and management issues. Aimed at that, a set of tools has been implemented, consisting in the integration of institutional analysis, several participatory methods, multi-criteria analysis and geographical information systems.

Extended Abstract

In this communication the use of forest planning on the island of Tenerife will be analysed. Sustainable forest planning implies the participation of stakeholder communities. In recent years, several authors have written about the complexity related to environmental processes (Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993; Munda, 2004; Corral, 1999) and the importance of the involvement of stakeholders in these processes (Funtowicz and Strand, 2007). Thus, Funtowicz and Ravetz (1993) proposed the post-normal to ensure the quality of these processes science. This requires involving citizens, namely "extended peer community".

After the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (UNCED, 1992) the participation of local communities in decision-making was considered a key element in relation to forest management. In addition, the International Labour Organization (2000) notes that public participation in forestry is an important aspect, because the existing knowledge about both the forestry-related issues and the interests of the stakeholders increase, improving the understanding of those issues and improving the transparency of planning and management processes, among other issues. (Mendoza and Martins, 2006)

In Tenerife¹ (the Canary Islands) a research project on the use of forest roads of the island is being carried out, in order to establish a participatory planning framework and to explore the results of its activity. In recent years the influx of people to the Islands' forest environment has notably increased. The growth on the number of visits is due to several reasons (i.e. practising adventure sports, running away from stressful urban areas, developing forest-related economic activities, ...) Moreover, some of the most recent users come to the mountains to practice motorized sports creating unusual issues in an already complex planning process of the use of forest tracks. In fact, more and more conflicts are arising among the users of those pathways. Due to that, the Insular Council of Tenerife (administrative body responsible for forest planning and management) is working on a regulation on the uses of forest tracks from a technocratic perspective. The first draft of this regulation has not been well received by the population of the island, because this implies some constraints to the access and to the allowed activities into the island' forest and mountains. This might be considered a radical change in the political insular arena since accesses and activities had never been regulated.

This communication deals with both a framing analysis and the design and implementation of a participatory multi-criteria approach to explore together with the stakeholders possible alternatives related to the above mentioned forest planning and management issues. This analysis follows recent works carried out by (Corral Quintana 2000), (B. De Marchi, S.O. Funtowicz et al. 2000) and (Paneque Salgado, Corral Quintana et al. 2009) among others and an approach based on the relevance of extended participatory assessments ((Guimarães Pereira and Corral Quintana 2002) and (Munda 2004)).

Aimed at that, a set of tools has been implemented, consisting in the integration of institutional analysis, several participatory methods, multi-criteria analysis and geographical information systems. Through the paper key methodological aspects and major findings will be discussed.

In the first phase an institutional analysis was conducted to detect those social actors involved as well as their concerns and positions related to the case study at hand, based on a historical revision and the analysis of the past 15 years of press articles. This framing process was complemented with the interviews carried out to several experts in the field. As a result, the most relevant

¹ Tenerife is one of the seven islands of the Canary Islands, it is located in the Atlantic Ocean between 27° and 29° north latitude, at a subtropical latitude, and between the 13° and 18° west longitude.

stakeholders involved in the process were disclosed, together with both their positions and mechanisms of interaction.

Based on that social mapping a participatory multi-criteria assessment process was developed. Two sets of interviews were carried out to the previously uncovered stakeholders. The first one aimed at gathering information about their role with regard to forest planning and management activities, and their perceptions about other social actors' point of view. They were also asked about which were the main forest issues in the island and their concerns regarding the past and present planning and management strategies.

During the second interview, a kind of a dialogue was established with the interviewed. It was devoted to propose different alternatives to the elicited issues. During this dialogue two group of alternatives emerged; some related to managerial issues (i.e. the use of prohibited areas, the improvement of surveillance and access, attendance points and improvement of infrastructures,...) and others related to planning aspects (one-way circulation vs. restricted to emergencies vs. free movement, ...). The interviewed were asked, as well, to produce a set of evaluation criteria; in that circumstance, an initial list of criteria was presented to facilitate the selection process but that list was, in each case, modified with their own criteria, emerging a set of economic, social, environmental and institutional criteria.

With the outcomes of these interviews two participatory evaluation assessments were undertaken –one related to planning and another to management issues. It has to be noticed that, although the initial idea of the research team was to assess a planning problem regarding the forest uses in Tenerife -since that was the perceived issue- after the participatory processes it was clear to us that our preliminary notion was incomplete, so several aspects had to be taken into account and had to be included in the original picture.

Once the alternatives and criteria were defined a multi-criteria assessment was carried out, applying NAIADE (Munda, 1995). Thus, an impact matrix was defined and the impact assessment was developed during a focus group session. The resulting ranking of alternatives and its geo-referenced representation was the pretext to start a dialogue among the participants about planning and management issues and possible actions and how they would influence each of them.

Finally in this paper, the main results of the participatory multi-criteria assessment will be discussed. The degree of acceptance of the different

alternatives by the actors involved in the process and how their interests are affected will emerge during this analysis. Some last remarks regarding the social evolution of the consensus process are considered particularly interesting and will be presented (i.e. how alliances and issue understanding by the stakeholders change during the social process of building the alternatives in a participatory framework).

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