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Local governance: issues and methods

by Nelly BOURLION

This article is an extract from the work realized in the component: “Development of participatory & territorial governance models of the Mediterranean forests ecosystem” from the project funded by FFEM and entitled: “Optimizing the production of goods and services by Mediterranean forests in a context of global changes”. All the documents drafted in the framework of this project are available on Plan Bleu’s website: www.planbleu.org

Local and participatory governance issues

In the actual context of global changes, such as climate change, land use and land cover changes, economic and social changes, natural resources managers those involved with, in particular, forests, have to face new challenges, with increased difficulties linked to uncertainty regarding the medium- and long-term effects of these numerous changes.

These new challenges require the active participation of both public and private stakeholders in the area who are affected by the use, development, management and conservation of forest resources and woodland areas. The participation of a larger range of stakeholders helps

pool efforts and resources, stimulates the economic exploitation of goods and services and the generation of revenues and socio-economic opportunities and may even facilitate access to funding. This is particularly relevant in the Mediterranean context, which is characterized by a wide range of functions, uses and users, where the direct profitability of forestry activities does not always maintain a sufficient flow of economic resources to support forestry policies and public development programs.

Participatory governance is an approach to consultation and decision making that involves stakeholders and people affected by the management of the areas in a coherent and accountable way. It offers tools to involve and jointly empower all area stakeholders, by establishing rights but also obligations, and by promoting more efficient management of available public resources. By involving stakeholders and taking into account their various interests and visions, better integrated/cross-sector policies can be created and applied that are better adapted to social demands and which take into account traditional activities. This improves the legitimacy of actions performed by the government and public institutions in the area, creates alliances and synergies between private economic stakeholders and civil society, and reduces the social and economic costs associated with implementing development programs.

Participatory governance implies collective, dynamic and adaptive learning that requires time, during which the preferences, representations, strategies and roles of the social stakeholders may change. By involving stakeholders in both defining sustainable development policies and decision-making, but also in implementing and monitoring them, it is possible to reduce the social, economic and environmental vulnerability of an area and the people who live there and/or depend on it. Taking into account various viewpoints and interests, jointly identifying issues, threats and opportunities and building a shared vision of a better future greatly improves the ability of stakeholders and areas to anticipate and adapt to changes, thus improving their resilience and sustainability. For example, in the governance of local communities, the communities must not only be considered an integral part of the problems to be resolved, but also key stakeholders in developing and applying solutions.

A definition of governance

What is governance?

The use of the word “governance” is now common in scientific circles, but also within management and civil society. This widespread use has created various definitions and interpretations of the concept, with a common characteristic: the stakeholders’ interactive game.

“Good governance” is subject to different interpretations determined by norms and values specific to each society. Therefore, it is difficult to define homogeneous models with universal value.

The United Nations proposes eight major characteristics of good governance: “participatory, consensus orientated, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society” (UN-ESCAP, 2007).

Participatory governance: a pillar of good governance

Participation of the various stakeholders in decision-making and implementation processes helps enhance awareness-raising and learning processes, and therefore the quality of decisions. It contributes to independence and promotes democratic citizenship (FAO, 2000; STRINGER *et al.*, 2006; KUPER *et al.*, 2009). Participation is key to increasing the social acceptance and legitimacy of the planning process, to guide public support for planning decisions, and achieve the efficient and profitable implementation of actions (BULKELEY *et al.*, 2003).

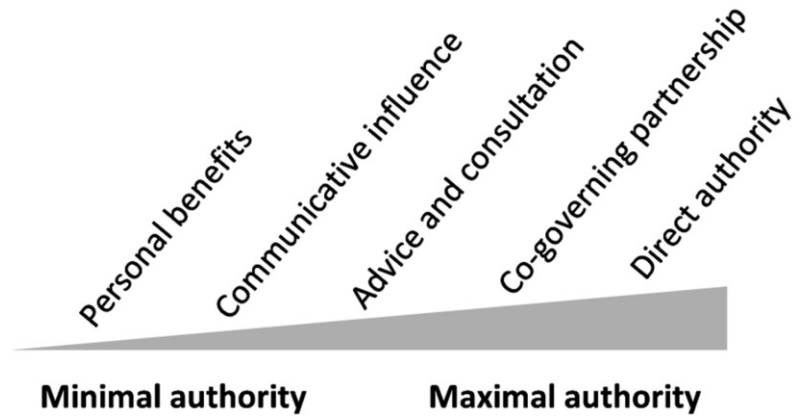
Participation is based on trust, communication and cooperation between all people and all groups involved in the process. It requires a clear and mutual understanding of what the participatory approach consists of, the possibilities opened as well as its codes and its limits. In general, the different stakeholders participate at different moments of the projects, and have variable levels of participation and decisional power. Therefore, some stakeholders participate during the whole process, while others only

occasionally. Some stakeholders are actively committed by accepting responsibilities and by being involved in concrete activities, whereas others are less active, and follow the process remotely.

There are a variety of possible relationships between participation and political decisions (Figure 1). In some instances, participation does not aim to influence policy or actions, and participants instead hope to derive personal benefit or fulfil a sense of civic obligation. Other participatory mechanisms exert a communicative influence on the authorities by mobilizing public opinion to formulate a collective decision. Advice and consultation is a third common mechanism through which participatory forums exert influence on public authority, and where officials preserve their authority and power but commit themselves to receiving input from participants. Sometimes, citizens who participate join in a kind of co-governing partnership in which they join with officials to make plans and policies or to develop strategies for public action. At a higher level of empowerment, participatory bodies occasionally exercise direct authority over public decisions or resources.

Participatory governance for forest management in the Mediterranean

Promoting and implementing a participatory approach to territorial management is not new in the Mediterranean countries and there are already many experiences and tools existing: for instance, the Integrated Local Rural Development Program (PPDRI) in Algeria, the Sylvo-Pasture Association (ASP) in Morocco, the Local Forestry Commission in Tunisia, the model forests in Turkey, the Biosphere reserves in Lebanon, etc. That said, the level of involvement often does not allow for a participatory approach in drawing up territorial development plans and carrying out concerted and sustainable actions for natural resources management. Until now, co-management initiatives (involving users in joint management systems with the State or local authorities) have been quite limited, but their implementation is clearly sought. The political will of Mediterranean governments currently supports the development of this type of approach, with a view to sustainably managing natural resources, providing users with



the goods and services they need to live decently and generating revenue through the long-term profitable use of these goods and services (GOURIVEAU, 2016).

Figure 1:
Extent of authority and power.
Adapted from Fung, 2006.

Tools and methods for participatory territorial development

The available methods and tools to promote participation and involvement of stakeholders are numerous. A flexible methodological framework organized in five main stages can be drawn up, through a process of adaptive group learning and continuous improvement (Figure 2). These phases can present some variations and are not necessarily executed sequentially. The different phases and the global development project and/or the resource management are generally supported and led by recognized organizations, which are legitimated and dynamic. These phases are based on a flexible governance structure involving different stakeholders depending on the type of initiatives (Figure 3).

Governance structure

The governance structure is linked to stakeholder objectives, needs and capacities, as well as the number of participants, the type of stakeholder involved and the legal status of the lead body. The governance structure may include a combination of the following bodies (Figure 3):

- the steering committee : comprising elected officials, representatives of government services and people who represent the

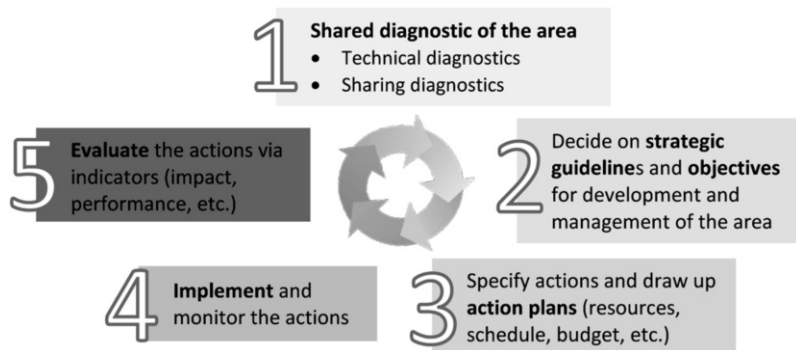


Figure 2: Phases of the participatory process for area development and the management of natural resources.

range of different interests of the stakeholders involved, steers and manages the process, drives the project forward, helps reach a consensus and has the greatest decision-making power;

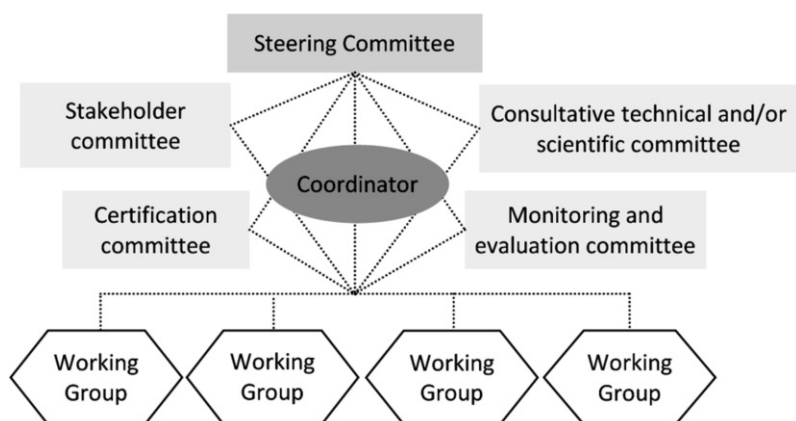
- the consultative technical committee : comprising experts on environmental, socio-economic and political aspects, gives its opinion on the proposed management and activities to the various bodies;

- the scientific committee : comprising recognized researchers representing the academic and research/innovation sector, gives its opinion on the scientific accuracy of work and decisions;

- the stakeholder committee : comprising representatives of stakeholders and their interests, prepares decision-making and the terms of reference for the working groups;

- the working groups : comprising stakeholder committee members, works on the technical aspects of sector-specific or cross-sector themes;

Figure 3: Example of a governance structure for participatory natural resource management.



- the lead body, via a Coordinator : mobilizes stakeholders, drives the work forward and ensures the cohesion and efficiency of the bodies and processes;

- sometimes, committees are created to meet specific needs, for example the certification committee to work specifically on the regulatory aspects relating to forest certification.

The legitimacy of these bodies and collective acceptance of their methods and operating rules are not only a major issue at the start but remain significant throughout the entire process, and coordinators must be aware of this. Nothing can ever be taken for granted when using participatory approaches.

Phases of the participatory process

The participatory process begins with a territorial diagnosis: of natural & human resources to identify the stakeholders, their roles, their skills and their legitimacy, as well as to plan their participation; identify resources and issues, as well as limits, conflicts, opportunities, synergies and management challenges of the territory. The available participatory methods and tools for this diagnosis are stakeholder mapping, surveys, interviews, collaborative SWOT analysis, or site visits.

The second phase of this process consists of defining strategic choices (axes, orientations and development objectives), which answer to the issues identified during the territorial diagnosis. The available methods are the scenario method, to explore the possible future in order to enlighten the present actions; or the Imagine method which seeks through indicators to federate local and regional government actors and offer tools to describe, evaluate and explore the sustainability level of a socio-economic system.

The third phase is developing the action plan to achieve the defined goals - through the definition of concrete activities to develop; and of their financing plan. Various tools are available such as working groups, meetings, analysis escalation process, or participative budget.

This phase is followed by the implementation of technical actions, and the development of strategies about communication,

awareness-raising measures, stakeholder capacity building, and networking. The available methods and tools are various and include either internal or external working meetings, multimedia tools, corporate actions, workshops & seminars, conferences etc. This phase also includes a participatory monitoring of actions which involves the stakeholders in the ongoing evaluation of the progress of the project or actions (results and achievement of objectives), by collecting and analyzing the information in order to improve and/or to redirect the activities and to take appropriate decisions.

Finally, the last phase of the process is the participative evaluation, thanks to tools such as external and/or internal audits, evaluation survey of the resources and space users, site visits, etc.

The tools that can be used in each of these phases are introduced in Table 1.

A greater number of stars indicates a greater utility of the method or tool for a given phase. These tools are described in technical factsheets available on Plan Bleu's website: www.planbleu.org

Concrete example in five Mediterranean countries

Smaller-scale initiatives, geared toward forests, water, natural and historical heritage management, exist in diverse southern countries. For example, the component: "Development of participatory & territorial governance models for Mediterranean forests ecosystems" managed by Plan Bleu in the project's framework "Optimizing the production of goods and services by Mediterranean forests in a context of global changes" funded by FFEM enabled work to be carried out in five Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia & Turkey). Its main goal was to reinforce the capacities for managing and/or restoring the Mediterranean woodlands by sustainably managing the goods and services they produce.

This component has made it possible to:

- facilitate the collaboration and participation of all the woodlands stakeholders in the management decisions in these territories and their execution;

Participatory approaches in the Maâmora forest (Morocco) *

The objectives of the proposed participatory approach for the Maâmora forest in Morocco are to:

- Build a suitable and effective participatory approach that should contribute to the development and successful implementation of the Maâmora Forest development plan, following its revision. In other words, identify to what extent actions of the management plan could be considered and implemented as part of a participatory approach.

- Consult/negotiate with the relevant stakeholders, including the local population, to promote their involvement in the rational management of natural resources (monitoring, conservation, exploitation) and in the conservation of sensitive sites.

- Design and promote participatory socio-economic models (suggestions and methods for organizing and exploiting the sectors in the area involved in the exploitation of non-wood forest products).

The participatory approach adopted has resulted in mapping the stakeholders directly and indirectly affected by the Maâmora ecosystems, identifying the issues, priorities and means of action, assessing the objectives associated with the issues faced, analyzing the power balance between stakeholders.

The 88 workshops organized as part of the participatory approach brought together a total of 543 people. Several steps were followed to draw up scenarios and an action strategy, including identification of the issues and feasible objectives, prioritization of the issues and identification of levers for action, identification and analysis of areas and key variables for the sustainable management of Maâmora ecosystems, analysis of the prospective assumptions of the scenarios.

Stakeholders were identified based on knowledge of the Maâmora site and during consultation workshops with members of the working groups. Issues further were broken down into several objectives. Stakeholders were then expected to take a position with regard to a series of objectives and compare their projects. Their objectives could be similar or different.

The analysis of the stakeholder influence/ dependency matrix revealed the following key points:

- Dominant stakeholders: they have strong influence over others, without being strongly influenced themselves: unorganized users and de facto users;

- Dominated stakeholders: strongly influenced by others with little power in agriculture and, to a lesser extent, forest farmers;

- Bridging stakeholders: both highly influential and highly dependent. This means that they have the means of action required to complete their projects but are also influenced by the actions carried out by others. For example, the High Commission for Water and Forests and Combating Desertification (HCEFLCD), rural municipalities, Economic Interest Groups and cooperatives, users organized in Silvopasture Management Associations (AGSPs) and offenders.

In order to implement the provisions of the standard scenario for the "integrated and concerted development of territories" in accordance with the strategic focuses specified and, also, taking into account the variables revealed by the analysis as being priorities, seven types of eco-socio-economic model were proposed. Their key objective was to ensure effective conditions and resources for the success of the technical actions set out under the Maâmora development plan.

Based on this analysis, a practical guide was developed, it proposes concrete processes and actions for managers to implement participatory and partnership approaches, including co-management with local user organizations (cooperatives, associations) and other key players (state, other institutions, private sector, etc.) in order to establish a mutually beneficial relationship.

* Study carried out by Prof. Mohammed Qarro within in the framework of the project "Optimizing the production of goods and services by Mediterranean forest ecosystems in a context of global changes" funded by the French Fund for the Global Environment. The full results of this study are available in the report Qarro (2016) and on Plan Bleu website.

– involve the diverse users of a territory in its management and its development by permitting simultaneously the taking into consideration the users’ needs and warning them about the vulnerability of the ecosystem on which they depend;

– reinforce the discussion and cooperation between the forest sector and other sectors involved or concerned in the woodlands management.

Each of the five countries involved in this project has tested at several pilot sites, various participatory governance methodologies, and eventually suggested consultation and participation processes involving different stakeholders in the management of woodlands in compliance with national public strategies and policies (PLAN BLEU, 2016).

Key messages

There is no perfect participatory methodology, which suits all the situations in the Mediterranean region. It has to be adapted to the aims, needs, resources, site specificities (environmental, technical, political, economic, social, cultural, etc.), and has to be flexible and dynamic enough to adapt itself to the changes.

Participation and engagement of stakeholders in the discussion and in the decisions are essential to the success and to the sustainability of initiatives. It allows viewpoints, interests and policies, to be better integrated, thus leading to better-informed decisions. The participatory process promotes synergies and alliances between pri-

Tools and methods for participation and communication	Planning	Implementation	Monitoring &évaluation	Finalization
Conferences		* *		* *
Consensus building	* * *	* *		
Courses and study programs		*		
Events		* *		
Experimental plots		* * *	* *	* *
Focus groups	* *	* *	* *	
Imagine	* * *			
Internal and external audits			*	*
Interviews	*		* * *	
Logical framework	* * *			* *
Meetings (annual, extraordinary, strategic)	* *		* *	
Method sheets		* *	* *	
Multi-party monitoring programs			* *	* *
Newsletter	*	* * *		* *
Online social networks		* *		* *
Open days		* *	* *	* *
Participatory budget	* * *	* * *		
Participatory mapping and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	* * *	* *		
Participatory platform for monitoring and evaluation			* *	* *
Postal surveys and questionnaires	*		* * *	
Press	*	* * *		* * *
Radio	*			* * *
Scenarios method	* * *	*	*	
Seminars	* * *	* * *		
Sheets with indicators of performance, results, impact, etc.			* * *	* *
Site visits	* *	* * *		* *
Stands		* *	* *	* *
Surveys and face-to-face questionnaires	* *		* *	
Telephone surveys and questionnaires	* *		* *	
Website	*	*	* *	*
Working groups	* * *	* * *		
Workshops	* * *	* * *		

Table 1: Available tools and methods for the various phases of a participatory local governance and management process.

vate and public stakeholders, decreases the cost of the implementation of the development program implementation, and generates financial mechanisms.

The rules have to be clear to avoid disappointment or suspicion. The participative monitoring and evaluations are essential to make sure that the goals are reached and that the achieved benefits can be quantified, demonstrated and shared.

Finally, a good participation does not necessarily mean involvement all during the whole process.

Expert opinion

by Jean de Montgolfier¹

1) In order to establish local and participative governance suitable to the sustainable development of territories, it is crucial, as shown in this article, to enforce good procedures and to create good structures. Beyond the quality of procedures and structures, the difficult point is to create a real trusting atmosphere: trust between the stakeholders, trust towards those who are offering and driving procedures and structures.

In some cultures, such as in North Europe, trust is granted spontaneously. But if it is realized that one participant has lied as to his real objectives and has offered manipulative procedures, it is disastrous for him. In the Mediterranean region, most of the time it is the opposite: suspicion is strong at first, in particular between local populations and some power structure or the Government. But once trust is won, it is real.

Generally, it takes several years for trust to develop strongly. That is probably the reason why some governance structures, established in the context of time-limited projects, collapse as soon as the funds linked to the project stop, even though these structures seemed excellent.

Most of the time, time and patience are primordial factors in establishing local and participative governance.

2) Even if the vocabulary has evolved during recent years, questions linked to the local participative management of woodlands, foresters or Mediterranean grazing have been key themes of Plan Bleu's thought since its origin: they appeared in its two big prospective reports in 1989 and in 2005.

They are also part of a Plan Bleu "compendium" (MONTGOLFIER, 2002).

For decades, in all Mediterranean forested countries, research and development institutes, professional and associative organizations, public bodies (regional natural parks...), have been working on those questions. Since its origins, the Table of Contents of the *Forêt Méditerranéenne* magazine proves it.

However, the truth is that these questions are longstanding. Local communities have established procedures and structured management of the forest and pastoral areas for ages. Already in the Middle Ages, numerous archive documents certify this idea, in particular established when conflicts between seigneurial rights and local community rights occurred. The discussion expanded, particularly in the mid-19th century, when states started huge reforestation works. An excellent synthesis was made for France in KALAORA and SAVOYE, 1985.

1 - Plan Bleu's General Secretary.

Figure 4 : Check list for the participatory management of territories



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The works shown in this article constitute an important milestone in this long story, by initiating cooperation between several countries from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

N.B.

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Summary

The current challenges faced by Mediterranean forests undeniably require the active participation of public and private stakeholders in the use, development, management and conservation of forest resources and woodlands. This is particularly relevant in the Mediterranean context, which is characterized by a multitude of functions, uses and users, where the direct profitability of logging does not always allow a sufficient flow of economic resources to support forestry policies and public development programs. The purpose of this article is not to present a comprehensive list of initiatives of governance and participatory management, nor to bring its reader and potential user to choose a methodology from those presented. Rather, the aim is to define participatory governance and its key principles that managers and stakeholders in the regions can draw on to develop participatory governance methodologies and tools tailored to their needs, objectives and resources.

Résumé

Les défis actuels auxquels font face les forêts méditerranéennes requièrent indéniablement la participation active des acteurs du territoire, publics et privés, concernés par l'utilisation, l'aménagement, la gestion et la conservation des ressources forestières et espaces boisés. Ceci est particulièrement pertinent dans le contexte méditerranéen, caractérisé par une multitude de fonctions, d'usages et d'usagers, où la rentabilité directe de l'exploitation forestière ne permet pas toujours de maintenir un flux suffisant de ressources économiques pour soutenir les politiques forestières et les programmes publics de développement. La finalité de cet article n'est pas de présenter une liste exhaustive d'initiatives de gouvernance et de gestion participative, ni d'amener son lecteur et potentiel utilisateur à choisir une méthodologie parmi celles présentées. Le but est plutôt de définir la gouvernance participative et ses grands principes dont les gestionnaires et acteurs des territoires pourront s'inspirer afin d'élaborer des méthodologies et outils de gouvernance participative adaptés à leurs besoins, objectifs et ressources.