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The Evolution of Stakeholders' Participation in a Process of Forest Policy Reform in Kyrgyz Republic *(reviewed paper)*

IRINA KOUPLEVATSKAYA-YUNUSOVA

Keywords: Forest policy process; participation; deliberation; governance; Kyrgyzstan; Central Asia. FDK 903 : (575.2)

Abstract: Die unter Mitwirkung erfolgte Reform nationaler Forstpolitik beweist, dass es sich um einen komplexen, mehrschichtigen Prozess handelt, in dessen Verlauf sich alle Beteiligten laufend an den sich ständig verändernden Kontext anzupassen haben. Am Beispiel von Kirgistan wird gezeigt, dass Mitwirkung nicht nur ein Vorgehen der beratenden Demokratie oder ein gemeinschaftliches Lernen ist, sondern sie ist für die stärkeren Stakeholder-Gruppen auch ein Mittel zur Wiedererlangung der Macht.

Abstract: National forest policy reform based on participation proves to be a complex multi-layer process in the course of which all the participants are subject to continuous adaptation to the permanently changing context. The example of Kyrgyzstan shows that participation is not only a procedure for deliberative democracy or collaborative learning, but also a means for re-appropriation of power by the stronger stakeholders.

Introduction

The Kyrgyz forest policy reform process began in 1997 as a stakeholder participatory process. In retrospect, this reform process has two clear stages: between 1997–2001 a new forest policy was elaborated, and during 2001–2005 there was a re-orientation of this forest policy. What were the circumstances and driving forces leading to these distinct stages? What characterized this shift and how was the content and outcome of the policy affected? Can existing theories of decision making and social development help to explain this shift? Did democratic processes of public participation in policy formulation influence the formerly centralized decision making system? Are there lessons learned from this experience that could be «transposed» to the design or understanding of other reform processes? What can be learned from the experience of the Kyrgyz forest policy process about using participatory processes as a means to reform centralized political systems? This paper provides an analysis of the evolution of the participatory procedures developed in the Kyrgyz forest policy reform process in order to suggest some answers to these questions.

Moves towards decentralization and democratization in the developing countries have created a new political climate that requires policy makers to be more accountable to the public. This is characteristic not only for the countries in transition, but also for the countries with «old democracies». The idea of creating better governance through broader participation of civil society is theoretically supported by scholars in both US and Europe (APPELSTRAND 2002; GERMAIN *et al.* 2001; FINGER-STICH 2003; SHANNON 1999, 2003; TABBUSH 2004), and also by European Union goals of achieving greater democratic governance through participatory models. Presently, when in «many countries Representative Democracy has been heavily criticized for its inability to protect citizens' interests... leading to the crisis of legitimacy faced by institutions» (PIMBERT & WAKEFORD 1991), the idea of participatory democracy is posed as an alternative model. Participatory democracy means that all the people who may be affected (i.e. all stakeholders) should be involved when policies and plans are made, put into action, monitored and evaluated. Participatory democracy is based upon a belief that open, public deliberation provides a policy or decision making environment in which reasons are publicly exchanged and the ability to mold solutions and achieve consensus on policies is developed from the exchange of such public reasoning. Clearly, a participatory process is based upon the principle of inclusion, in that the involvement

of multiple social actors is necessary for sufficient representation of all affected and interested stakeholders. In practice, there is attention to ensure the participation of previously excluded citizens so as to equalize political influence. Thus, a participatory model embraces both open discourse and deliberation and broad inclusiveness of viewpoints and interests in order to democratise policy making and move beyond representative democracy and traditional forms of consultation (BREGMAN 1999). Different stakeholders have different ways of understanding of what is happening as well as different solutions to perceived problems. Ensuring that all points of views are given a fair hearing and full consideration means that a complete set of, often contradicting, claims, concerns and issues would be drawn up as a basis for a negotiated compromise leading to a commonly accepted decision (BUTTOUD & YUNUSOVA 2003b). Deliberation and inclusion also provide an important learning experience for the participating policy makers, bureaucrats and professionals, by challenging their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour through debate and interaction with lay people and ordinary citizens (PIMBERT & WAKEFORD 1991). A first experience of deliberative participation in the forest policy formulation, implementation and evaluation processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, one of ex-soviet republics, gives an interesting context for analysing the evolution of stakeholders' participation in a process of forest policy reform.

Framework

The Kyrgyz Republic emerged as a newly independent state after the collapse of the Soviet Union and declared itself a democracy. The period under consideration (1991–2004) is clearly marked by a new phenomenon for the Kyrgyz society: transition to a market economy and political decentralisation with consequent institutional, economic and social reforms. The needed modes of governance were considerably different from the previously practised ones, which were extremely centralised, top-down planning systems. Thus, different types of relations in society led to the recognition of and need for changing the ways of political decision making. Those general trends in the political life of the country had a direct impact on the situation in its forestry sector. The Kyrgyz forestry sector at this time can be characterised by (i) state ownership on the forests, managed by the state forestry administration through territorial subdivisions (management units)¹; (ii) insignificant forest cover combined with low accessibility and

limited management²; (iii) concomitant to low legal market value, a high ratio of uncontrolled excessive use by the local population (through grazing and illegal fellings for firewood and construction purposes) caused by the economic difficulties in the country; (iv) very unstable conditions of the forest, due to previously imposed silviculture and especially unregulated human pressure.

In this context, the process of elaboration of a new forest policy was initiated, having been introduced and facilitated, to a great extent, by international donors³. Mindful of the multiplicity of existing interests in the relation to forest management and the wide variety of stakeholders, the importance of the expression and representation of all the interests was considered as a main requirement of the new forest policy. Furthermore, consequent to the democratic processes which were being developed in the country, the forestry administration could no longer serve as the only decision maker. Thus deliberative processes needed to be introduced as a mechanism for decision making in order (i) to help the stakeholders to form their own opinions and expectations; (ii) to offer the participants of the process a possibility to justify their views and permit definition of potentials and priorities, because deliberation encourages people to provide general justifications or reasons, and not just private preferences (LEVINE 2002); (iii) to give the decision makers a better insight into the public' concerns and, finally, (iv) to legitimise the decisions. The inclusion of various stakeholders representing different, and often opposed, interests (with the background of practical lack of previous experience with participation in common decision making) required a very rigorous framework in order to base decisions on a compromise between various existing positions and interests.

For the conditions of the Kyrgyz Republic, a combination of an instrumental rationalist model policy making and the communicative incremental one seemed to be the most appropriate framework, since this approach could combine the habitual way of top down decision making with new democratic trends in the development of the Kyrgyz society. With the application of the «mixed model» (BUTTOUD & SAMYN 1999; BUTTOUD 2000) adapted for forest policy decisions using specific cases (BUTTOUD & YUNUSOVA 2002, 2003a), the forest administration acted as a major contributor, trying to reconcile a logical rationalist sequence for identifying and classifying principles, objectives and means (normative and deductive logic) with a negotiation approach (systemic and inductive process), thus replacing instrumental rationalism by a social consensus. The main feature of the mixed model is to involve all stakeholders at each step of a rationalist sequence for defining and implementing new decisions. This process may bring a mutually complementing top-down and bottom-up approaches into procedures and institutions (BUTTOUD 1999a). The mixed model, as applied in the Kyrgyz process, included the following steps, all conducted in a participatory way:

- systematic analysis of the current situation;
- formulation and structuring of objectives (aimed at the solution of identified problems), grouped as a comprehensive strategy with expressed needs for changes;
- identification of precise measures and means for the implementation of the strategy;
- policy implementation;
- follow-up and evaluation.

The basic objectives of the new Kyrgyz forest policy formulation process were concerned with:

- (i) specification of the relationships between the forestry administration, local authorities and the local population, based on co-operation and democratic principles;

- (ii) definition of the need for technical adaptation with a guarantee of a better link between conservation and use of the forests;
- (iii) overcoming organisational limits and an outdated management structure, which were characterised by excessive centralisation, heavy bureaucratic systems, excessive control from the politically powerful and strong controlling structures;
- (iv) improvement and adaptation of forestry legislation.

Participation during the first stage: elaboration of a new forest policy (1997–2001)

Analysis of the current situation in the forestry sector in Kyrgyzstan (1997–1998)

The process began in an empirical way by conducting a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) that was still based on a traditional rationalist analysis of the potentials and constraints for defining the public action. The technique was based on the following procedures: preliminary individual enquiries, conducted both in written form and as interviews, for the expression of initial stakeholders' demands and positions; complementary information from the analysis of existing documents; workshops for common discussion of individual positions; working groups for expert analysis and summarizing of all the received information; public seminars for presentation and open discussion of the results at a broader level. At this step, the term «participation» was introduced, along with procedures for promoting participation. In order to help the participants to overcome their mental resistance and promote free deliberation, the technique of «cards on board» was applied (the participants were asked to provide their ideas anonymously, on the cards, which were then grouped on the board and served as a basis for discussion).

What kind of participation took place? Looking back at this first step, several main characteristics of the process could be stated:

- It was a very broad inclusion of various actors and stakeholders of the forestry sector, from all the levels of hierarchical structure, vertically and horizontally (over nine hundred people, have been participating during the nine months period of the process).
- It was rather a consultation, where the decision-makers were asking a group of stakeholders to give their opinions and/or provide advice on some topics, without delegating any decision authority. At the same time, it was a resource participation, as the stakeholders were invited to participate not only for their information input in the discussion, as resource persons. Their presence was instrumentalised also for legitimization of the processes or its decisions vis-à-vis a higher hierarchy (Buttoud 1999a). The information on facts was the main element of communication and the participants were rather expected to give their knowledge and opinion on the difficulties and potentials of the sector

¹ Still preserved from the Soviet time hierarchical system of «les-hozes» (territorial forest management units) with centralized top-down decision making.

² For over 50 years silvicultural measures were restricted to maintenance and sanitary measures, due to declared protective role of the forests.

³ Basically the Kyrgyz-Swiss Forestry Support Programme (Kirfor), which has been implemented in Kyrgyzstan since 1995 by a Swiss Foundation, «Intercooperation».

at the moment. At the same time, having no previous experience of participation in decision making, and being unsure of possible outcomes, they were anyway reluctant to make any analysis or critiques.

- It was a collaborative learning process, which formulated a general consensus that a new forest policy was needed in order to improve the situation. Collaborative learning is an approach which tends to reconcile various positions in an adaptive way through a direct co-operation. As it gives the main initiative to the actors (partners) themselves, a clear basic consensus among them is required at the outset to ensure the effectiveness of this method (BUTTOUD & YUNUSOVA 2003b). At the same time, it was also basic practical learning: from the side of participants-both technically (learning how to express their own ideas) and mentally, (learning that participation in policy formulation process was possible in principle). From the side of the decision makers, (forestry administration), it was learned that inclusion of other actors and stakeholders (including forestry technicians, the executors of decisions) may bring additional information and ideas and promote the legitimacy of decisions.
- The supporting role of the expert group had an utmost importance both for organizing and leading the process and analyzing the results.

National Concept of Forestry Sector Development (1999)

This document was conceived as a Governmental statement setting up strategic political goals (for 20–25 years) and defining the main strategies for their achievement. The same conceptual framework of the mixed model, the same techniques promoting participation and deliberation, the same procedures for involving participants as during the analysis of the current situation in 1997–98 were applied for the process of elaboration of the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development (YUNUSOVA 1999). However, since this step immediately followed the analysis, the capacities for participation created during that preceding step of the policy process were evident and easy to assess:

- (i) People involved during the first step often volunteered to participate in the second one, willing to be part of decision-making.
- (ii) Having learned how to express their own positions, participants started to provide critical and constructive ideas.
- (iii) Establishment of the process and involvement of the actors were easier to organise;
- (iv) Contributions of participants were changing from an informational to a quality participation, as the participants did not limit themselves to only providing information. They were now able to argue and defend their own positions. Furthermore, they were willing to check whether the expressed ideas were included in the draft document.
- (v) Forestry administration itself became very much involved in the process: providing assistance in organisation, mobilising actors and stakeholders for participation, directly participating in the process and lobbying for the results at the Government level.

The changed attitude to and capacities for participation inevitably caused the change of methodology. A more conscious participation (compared to the stage of analysis) gave a clearer shaping of the stakes, thus bringing up the issue of a necessary compromise between conflicting interests (total

protection vs. multiple use; top down planning vs. decentralisation; public involvement in forest management vs. strictly restrictive legislation, etc). The strategic character of the document required compromise on the visions of the long term perspectives (25–30 years in the case of the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development), thus all the disputable items related to the different possible scenarios for the future were discussed by the various participants, in a very abstract way. For stimulating the discussions and promoting a compromise, the technique of «cards on board» was applied oriented to the needs of negotiation: cards received from the participants were re-grouped on the board as:

- (i) ideas understood and accepted by everybody, thus not requiring further discussion (eg. status of foresters and forest guards, increase of the forest cover etc) and considered as commonly acceptable possible decisions;
- (ii) ideas generally conflictual, but leaving a possibility for negotiation (eg. mainly the aspects related to conservation and utilisation of resource and internal management structures inside the forest service);
- (iii) points absolutely conflictual, with no possibility of discussion at the moment of presentation (mainly inter-institutional relations with the ministry of environment), such issues were usually excluded from discussion.

Further negotiation was mainly concentrated on the ideas from the second group of cards. But, due to the abstract nature of the discussed strategy, such cards were not yet numerous.

New Forest Code (1999)

A Forest Code, as a legal framework defining rights and duties of anyone for the implementation of the new policy, needed to be derived from the Government statement and based on the strategic lines defined by the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development (Concept). The phase of draft elaboration of this Forest Code introduced the first break down in the participatory process. As a result of deliberative elaboration of the Concept, forestry administration in general, and its leader at that moment in particular, had created a very good image of «democratic reformists» both at the national level and governmental structures, and throughout the hierarchy of the forest service. In the circumstances of parliamentary election campaigns, occurring at that moment, the Forest Code was of a very high political interest. Thus, within a very short period (6 months) the forestry administration prepared a draft Forest Code with no link to the Concept and participation. This way, the important political decision was made in traditional technocratic authoritarian way, disregarding results of participatory process, but using «participatory» as a slogan while lobbying the draft Forest Code in the Parliament.

Programme «Les» (2000) – 5 years Action Plan for the period 2001–2005

After being defined and legally constructed, the new forest policy needed to be implemented. The programme Les⁴ (Action Plan 2001–2005) was conceived as an executive tool for the implementation of the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development. The prepared draft included a general part

⁴ Programme «Les» («forest» in Russian) – For juridical reasons, the name was preserved from traditional 5-year plan of activities prepared for the forestry sector in a centralized way, during the Soviet period.

with orientation for activities and basic elements for achieving objectives defined by the national policy (approaches to be conducted, means to be set up). In the annex, following the same logic, more detailed tables presented main objectives, priorities, expected results and related means engaged at the level of all the management units. The tables also focused on the role and tasks of forestry administration in assistance to the strategies of the management units. Such a technically comprehensive draft plan was a result of a process which followed the same logic of the mixed model (as during the Analysis and Concept preparation), when the input from various actors and stakeholders received in the course of discussions and workshops was complemented by traditional technocratic planning at the level of the management units themselves and analytical summarizing of results by an experts' group.

An abstract approach treating general conceptual issues, as it was applied for defining the strategic links of the policy, was not sufficient for more specific discussions related to what should be done immediately. Furthermore, for the participants the operational technical aspects of concrete activities to be implemented (by most of them), have presented much more interest and importance than abstract strategy, thus the conflicts of interests became more evident and frequent. For this purpose, the approach of constructive confrontation (BUTTOUD 1999b) was adapted. The method consisted in grouping and discussing all the disputable issues expressed (at that moment) by the participants, which would need to be addressed by the plan. Hypothetically, discussion of the existing problems and analysis of divergences can give a good basis for defining means for resolution and implementation. Practically, and this was the interest of the applied methodology, many of the formerly conflicting issues found a compromise resolution in the course of such discussion-confrontation. A simple and very «present practice»-oriented way of putting questions was adapted to the knowledge, experience and capacities of the participants of the process. In the process of plan formulation, the participants were mainly representing foresters, forest rangers (forest management units i.e. the direct implementers of the plan) and the local population: villagers and representatives of the local authorities (village and regional councils), i.e. those who would be affected by the plan. Thus the logical frame for discussions was oriented towards:

- The present situation (description, logic) disclosed through questions like: «How are the forests used by stakeholders? Who are the main actors? How much is the forest beneficial to the users? What are the relations between stakeholders and the forest managers? What are the interests of the local people to the forest? How do foresters consider the demands of local population?»
- The challenges to be addressed, defined through questions like: «What are the local and regional problems to be solved through forest conservation and development? What are the priorities for forest management?»
- The existing capacities through questions like: «What is (at the moment) existing and being done? Are the existing management tools adapted to forest conservation and development? Are there additional possibilities for improvement of actions?»
- The constraints to be foreseen: «What are the constraints limiting the implementation of previously planned activities? Are the previously planned activities achieving the expected results? What can be potential difficulties for reaching some of the defined objectives? Is there any risk in implementing some actions, with possible negative side-effects? What are the disputable points between managers and other actors?»

- The actions to be identified: «How can the situation be improved in the future? What are the priorities in selection of possible measures? What would be the time-frame for each defined action? How can the technical planning be improved? Which new technical or organisational solutions may be useful? Which actions would be proposed by the participants?»
- The partnership structure: «Is there any need for an additional coordination of actions? How the actions are to be carried out? What should be the arrangements between the various participants? What are the relative responsibilities of the actors in implementation?»
- The way for follow-up and evaluation of the actions: How to appreciate or even measure that the action is satisfactorily conducted or not? Which indicators must be retained for each negotiated objective? What should be the best periodicity for the evaluation? Who could perform the follow up and evaluation (YUNUSOVA 2003)?

This logical frame gave a good basis for the common part of the plan, which was providing general lines for activities. Complementing technical tables have been prepared by the management units, following similar techniques, with the inclusion of all the staff of the unit (new procedure in practice)⁵. An expert group at the level of forestry administration was responsible for the final design of the draft plan. The application of the «mixed model» considerably broadened the structure of participation and promoted a complete «bottom up approach». The process was first conducted at the regional level, and then aggregated, with the use of similar techniques, at the national level. Discussions and negotiations between the public authority and the stakeholders were introduced at each step of the process and, in many cases, led to compromise decisions. Nevertheless, the well organized broad deliberative process applied for the formulation of this action plan, in the long run did not guarantee that the final approval of the plan would respect democratically created ideas and concerns. Presentation of the final draft of the Action Plan for the approval of the Government was in the responsibility of administrators who have been dealing with the preparation of 5 year action plans since the time of the Soviet Union. Initially they were involved in the participatory process for the definition of the new Action Plan, but quit the process with the arguments that plans should be defined by specially trained experts. Eventually, they have re-arranged the prepared draft plan so that it would fit habitual framework and re-oriented it to the achievement of the extended areas of new forest plantations. And that was the Action Plan approved by the Government. Since the Action plan for the forestry sector would not have a very big impact on the majority of the population of the country, the forestry policy makers did not feel obliged to be accountable to the general public, while, at the sectoral level, where the structure was very much hierarchical, accountability did not present a very big challenge. As it was the case with the Forest Code, a soviet style top down prescriptive 5-year plan (with complete disregard of results of participatory process) concluded this first stage of the new Kyrgyz forest policy reform. Implementation of this plan was expected to follow a usual «top-down command»-«bottom up report» system.

⁵ Here it should be noted that not yet all the management units were able to prepare such tables, which could be partially explained by the lack of experience and skills for analysis and planning and, sometimes, professional knowledge among the managers. This proves the importance of the role of capacity building in promoting quality participation.

Evidently, when the democracy has not been well-rooted in the society, just an individual deliberative process, initiated for a quite technical decision does not change the conventional authoritarian way of decision making.

What can be concluded from this first stage?

The participatory process for the Kyrgyz national forest policy formulation is usually presented as a successful exercise by the government and the international community. As a new phenomenon (for Kyrgyzstan reality) it has introduced significant changes in public norms and procedures. It has also changed the foresters' understanding of forest management and economy (including multipurpose management concept and norms), due to the involvement of the local population into the process. Finally, various participants have realised that they could play an effective role in decision making, and that policy was not an abstract notion. All this is true, but there were also some big constraints in the process. (YUNUSOVA *et al.* 2003). First, it was difficult to associate many participants coming from private or non governmental institutions, the former being not active yet, and the latter showing little interest when it comes to forest management issues. In the majority of cases, participants of the workshops, coming from the forest service at different levels, used the discussion as a forum for promoting their own interests. Finally, the following summarised conclusions can be drawn from the first stage.

Democratic processes really require learning elements

The psychological weight of the soviet system heritage decreased the capability of deliberation and free self-expression for many of the participants. At least at the beginning of the process, participants seemed to be reluctant to speak or even have an opinion on forest policy measures. From the methodological point of view, the technique of cards on board at the initial stage of the process, proved to be very helpful in «getting the people talking.» The «experienced» participants, those who were involved in different steps of the process, have progressed from consultation-participation to free deliberation and lobbying. The evidence for this was the change of manner and content of their contribution to the process. The majority of participants did not have a strategic vision and were not experienced in abstract thinking. Thus, technical and practical issues related to their daily lives and professional activities were covered better in discussions, while strategic policy aspects were left out. This dynamic demonstrates that a bottom-up approach alone is not sufficient for a comprehensive decision. The input of many of the participants was limited by their scope, knowledge and experience. Therefore, a technical expert analysis should complement the communicative processes.

Democratic processes depend on political, cultural, ethical and historical frameworks

A broader model of policy decision making is needed for guiding the final decision (unless the interests of a majority are on stake). Otherwise, there is always a risk of disregarding decisions taken in a participatory way. This is especially true for narrow sectoral policies, which also have a more narrow impact on the society in general. The dominant role of the State in the decision-making may result in the increase of regulatory and restrictive aspects of the legislation, thus leading to the consolidation of power of the already most powerful stakeholders (as it was in the case with forestry administration and the Forest Code). It is impossible to «force» participation. During the period under consideration, forest policy formulation might have been viewed as a narrow sectoral process by

NGOs, the Ministry of Environment and Nature Conservation, as well as by other sectoral ministries, who opted for not participating. There are various reasons for this ranging from their lack of readiness and knowledge for participation, (same as it was the case for the other stakeholders) to the feeling of competing interests (conservation of environment vs. multipurpose forest use). There is always the question of representation. Usually representation refers both to the relationship between the individual participants and the entity they are expected to represent as well as to the relationship between these entities and the broader society. How representative were the participants in the Kyrgyz case, if generally in the society there are no constituted associations or interest groups? In this case one can never be sure that all the relevant components (here, social needs) may be reasonably expressed. If only some of identified and specific stakeholders are participating in the process, how does one include ethical and cultural aspects of the meaning of forestry for the people? Each participant has his own concepts, perceptions of reality, language for knowing this reality. Tools and conceptual frameworks may differ from one participant to another, because expected results are also different. Pluralism means very often incoherence (BUTTOUD 1999b). As the participants may be numerous and opposed, there may be a lot of contradictory issues. Participatory planning was frequently used by the politicians as a binding obligation to achieve the plan's fulfillment. As an example, the «participation card» was played when lobbying the Parliament, leading to the beginning of the instrumentalisation of participation.

A rigorous methodology is needed for facilitating the process of deliberation

As one of alternative strategies of the forest policy formulation in Kyrgyzstan was to install deliberative participatory procedures for decision making in the forestry sector, special attention was given to a broadest possible involvement of various stakeholders. For this purpose, written enquiries and oral interviews were used along with workshops and common discussions. A rigorous technique for combining the above factors is costly, takes significant effort and considerable time. At the same time the practice showed that the involved participants tended to react and behave differently during individual interviews and group discussions. Quite frequently, speeches during workshops were contradicting answers provided during individual interviews. Therefore, for the organizers of the process it was essential to utilize a combination of various types of communication. It was also concluded that only the nominal group process (groups of participants involved in discussions) was not sufficient to identify stakeholders' issues, values and desired changes. Because of a possible lack of representativeness and preparation of many of the stakeholders for participation, there was a great likelihood that some of the key issues might be left out simply because no one happened to mention them. That is why it was very useful in the Kyrgyz process to combine communicative participative aspects and a technical analysis.

Moderation is a key issue in the process

In the deliberation process, with the inclusion of various types of representatives, there may be many sources of subjectivity. Participants in the process may have limited competence in valuing complex processes, such as forest policy or biodiversity conservation. Routine habitual procedures in the day-to-day matters, when people are making decisions for themselves, are different from the situation when their views, expressed in unusual and for them artificial conditions may lead to a decision, binding for the others. This fact surely affects delib-

eration. On this point, the role of an independent facilitator-moderator is essential. In this respect two important observations are worth mentioning.

- Selection of a moderator: a) a moderator should have some knowledge about the subject of the debate and the background of the process, while at the same time, having no specific personal (nor corporative) interest in the result of the debate; b) a moderator is not supposed to give advice on the possible solutions, but mainly to help participants look for a solution, so experience with the techniques of moderation is important; c) a moderator should have a good potential for an immediate analysis of what may be needed for both stimulating the discussion and mastering the situation.
- Techniques for moderation: a) systematic use of the technique of «cards on board» through a pre-established procedure for expressing basic views and structuring negotiated conclusions; b) open discussion only for comments at the end of each workshop, and conclusions drawn only from clear, verified and reported consensus; c) «active listening» during the discussion, permitting the separation of facts and interpretations, or individual assessments; d) promotion of the involvement of participants through organized discussion; e) observing the procedure of the process (agenda, time-frame, ethics of discussion); f) systematic coming back to the discussion of conclusions of the previous step before initiating the next one.

The involvement of a facilitator may also bring to the consideration of the absence of information during the discussion as a piece of information by itself. In most of the cases, an expert study of the issues being discussed is needed in order to provide the negotiation process with external «neutral» information to be discussed afterwards among the participants.

Those were the key lessons from the first period of the new forest policy elaboration in Kyrgyzstan.

Participation during the second stage of the process: re-orientation of the new forest policy (2001–2005)

Why a re-orientation of the new forest policy?

The reasons for a re-orientation of the new forest policy in Kyrgyzstan were linked to several basic factors. One of them was the continuous transition processes in the country: The concept of a societal transition generally refers to the idea of short revolutionary period leading to incremental or gradual processes of change in complex systems. Such transitions, or structural changes, are the result of many causal interactions on a number of different levels (LOORBACH 2004). Historical analysis of societal transitions suggests that transition processes go through different stages, whereas the nature and speed of change differ in each phase:

- predevelopment phase with very little visible change on the societal level, but with a lot of experimentation;
- in the take-off phase the process of change gets under way and the state of the system begins to shift;
- in the acceleration phase structural changes take place in a visible way through an accumulation of socio-cultural, economic, ecological and institutional changes that react to each other; during this phase, there are collective learning processes, diffusion and embedding processes.
- in the stabilisation phase the speed of societal change decreases and a new dynamic equilibrium is reached.

From this point of view the policy formulation stage, described in the previous section has followed the same logic and was developing as an outward spiral⁶ (BARSTAD 2002; figure 1).

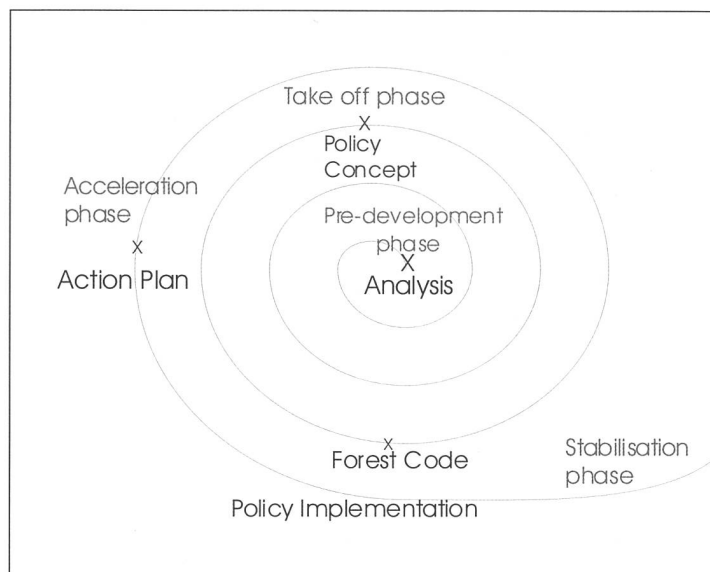


Figure 1: The forest policy process in Kyrgyzstan conceived as an outward spiral and developed following the transition phases (KOUPLJEVATSKAYA-YUNUSOVA 2004).

Abbildung 1: Der forstpolitische Prozess in Kirgistan, dessen Übergangsphasen durch die Spirale versinnbildlicht werden.

At the same time, transition from a planned to a market economy followed by decentralization and general changes in social, economic and political environment, in their turn, had an impact on sectoral policies and governance which were changing very fast following the transition phases. Thus, after only five years of having the new forest policy in place, considerable changes had occurred in the society and required policy adaptation. The second factor was the iterativity of the process. The iterative deliberative process which has been initiated for forest policy formulation requires continuous adaptation through small steps instead of fundamental changes, according to the muddling through theory for continuous adaptation (LINDBLUM 1959). It is aimed at solving one problem at a time, often using some former solutions until they are proven false. This tactic is applied when reaching for long-term strategic goals, and thus there is an iterative need for evaluation at some intervals, in order to see how the goals are being reached and what kind of changes and adaptation might still be still needed. The results of evaluation of forest policy implementation after 5 years, as foreseen by the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development, can give a clear vision of the needed adaptations. Adaptation, like continuous learning, is a process whereby the actors are seeking for better ways in order to realize their own needs, interests and values, i.e. for the new means to reach existing goals, while taking the results achieved as a basis for defining new goals with consideration of the changed situation.

Public deliberation through participation, which was the basis for policy formulation during the first stage, has initiated a deliberative process with communicative objectives and political learning effect, insofar as participation was teaching the participants to become more capable of understanding and taking a position towards political issues (BOON 1999). Deliberation also creates social learning which means that the

⁶ Barstad, J. 2002: Iterative planning processes; supporting and impeding factors. <http://www.metla.fi/eu/cost/e19/barstad.pdf> (September 21, 2005).

deliberative community learns together through analysis and debate. Through such deliberative processes arise various conceptions of «desired future conditions» for society and the economy (SHANNON 2002) and, also uses of resources. Thus the «learning effect» achieved during the stage of policy formulation has affected both the capacity for participation and quality of input in the course of participation, which means that not only has the way of decision taking has changed, but also the decisions themselves (in this case strategy and activities, means and ends also needed to be changed, or, rather adapted to the new knowledge). During the policy formulation stage, the involved actors and stakeholders, the participants, having no previous experience of involvement in decision-making, no strategic view on «desired future», incapable of clear formulation of their stakes and ideas, could not make a strategic contribution to the process. The situation was similar as for the administration: new experience of sharing the decision-making process, of an intersectoral view of sectoral policy, and a as yet unacknowledged need for political legitimacy of decisions did not promote a good leadership of the process. As a result, the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development lost its strategic value already after 5 years because the constituting ideas and priorities had only a short-term vision.

Evaluation of forest policy implementation (2003)

A retrospective evaluation of the processes and results is required from the perspective of strategic adaptive planning (AMDAM 1997). This is why an evaluation of the forest policy implementation after 5 years period was planned by the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development. This evaluation was also intended to provide the State Forest Service with practical suggestions for how to contribute to better implementing the relevant decisions at the field level at the time when, if the need might come, there was still a possibility for modification of the relevant plans and decisions. As the policy process is a continuous one, the same procedures, as for the formulation stage, were applied for the evaluation of policy implementation. The expert work complemented contributions from the workshops' discussions which were led with the application of the same methodology of constructive confrontation. Draft proposals prepared by an expert group were regularly presented for a broader public debate through round tables, conference and mass media presentations. (YUNUSOVA *et al.* 2003). The final report on evaluation of forest policy implementation was presented, discussed and officially accepted at a National Conference, where representatives of Kyrgyz Government, Parliament, offices of the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic, sectorial ministries and international projects working in the country, as well as specialists of the forestry sector were involved.

Revision of the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development (2004)

One of the results from the evaluation procedure was to stress that considering the changes occurring at the country level, a new Concept needed to be developed to replace the 1999 statement. At this step, the state forest administration completely appropriated the results of the participatory policy evaluation process so that the revision of the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development was conceived as a purely technical work by the expert group inside the forest service. This was also partly due to the time pressure on translating the results of the evaluation of forest policy implementation into political commitments. The core group directly used the recommendations of the evaluation in the new National Concept

of Forestry Sector Development, considered now as the primary basis for all future political and legal documents to be designed in the forestry sector. This new Concept had a particularly high political importance for the forestry administration, as it guaranteed preservation its achieved status and functions, so that participation has been also organised at the political level: representatives of competing ministries (environment, agriculture, finance), members of Parliament, Government and the President's office were invited to a round table discussion, where the results of the evaluation of policy implementation were once again presented as a basis to be transformed into amendments to the National Concept for Forestry Development. The resolution issued after the round table discussion was used for lobbying for approval of the document by the Government. At this step, when the question of power distribution was put on the table, the «mutual gains» method (BUTTOUD 1999b) for stressing the community of interests and reaching a consensus was effectively applied. Starting from this step, the results of the forest policy process became part of the public relations' campaign of the forestry administration and were broadly presented in printed and visual media.

The National Forest Programme (2004)

In order to put into practice the policy commitments of the Concept, a National Forest Programme (NFP) was elaborated. The National Forest Programme defines a complex of activities and measures for implementation of the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development. Following the international forest policy process, the state forest service realized the importance of an NFP for satisfying requirements of existing and potential donors. Therefore, the preparation of this document again worked as a pure technical exercise, made by the same expert group with support of international consultants, based on results of the participatory process during the policy evaluation step. The reasons for such a choice were similar to those described in relation to the revision of the National Concept of Forestry Sector Development. The draft was approved by the Prime-Minister and presented at the Regional Congress as a model of forest policy formulation for post-Soviet countries. The re-animation of participation at the stage of policy evaluation in Kyrgyzstan played a major role in the executive steps of the process, but it did not clearly influence the final decision.

General conclusions from the second stage

The evaluation process is a way to brush up participation
After a «step back» during the policy implementation stage, when «plan – report» relations were following a purely technocratic top-down scheme, the evaluation brought back the issue of involvement of various actors and stakeholders. Although it was not a spontaneous process, it was again initiated by an international donor (Kyrgyz-Swiss Forestry Support Programme, Intercooperation). But, at this stage, the state forest service, having learned from the policy formulation experience that it could gain from the process of involving stakeholders, took a more active position and led the whole process. The need for intersectorality has become more pressing, presumably due to the general processes ongoing in the society, and thus representatives of other ministries (Ministries of Environment, Justice, Finance, Water and Agriculture) were frequently invited for discussions. Local communities were included into the process as well as local authorities (village councils and regional administrations were regularly informed on the results). Participation as information feed-back was

broadly used at this step. From an administrative perspective, this type of participation can be considered as an efficient means for data collection and an integral part of a broader participatory strategy (NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS 2002).

To some extent, it was still a consultation from the side of forestry administration, when participants were not given a real power to influence the decisions, while a new characteristic of the process was functional participation that is besides bringing the information, the participants were actively taking part in the discussions in order to have their ideas disputed and changed from the general discussion (BUTTOUD 1999a). Now the process has included components of expert deliberation with stakeholders' review and political dialogue, with public deliberation expert review (SHANNON 1999).

There are different capacities for learning in the process of participation

Considering the policy-making process as a process of learning, the questions are, who has learned, what has been learned and what kind of impacts the learning has produced. In the Kyrgyz case, the groups of those who learned more, may include experts (the working group, consultants, representatives of the donor organization), state officials (politicians, forestry administration, bureaucrats) and some social actors (interest groups, general public). Theoretically these people could learn about different options for structuring decision-making organizations and processes, the different means to accepted ends, and even the different ends that policy can achieve. Practically, it became evident that the more powerful and better organised stakeholders, in this case the forestry administration, could learn faster and take control over the discussion procedures and get more power due to the deliberation process (in Kyrgyzstan political and administrative status of forest service, during the policy process period, has grown from a department within Ministry of Environment to a Forest Service under the President of the Republic, with managing and controlling functions over the forest wildlife resources). As for the social groups, the level of learning from participation was directly depending upon the status of participants: technical forestry personnel were less open to participation and more restricted to an expression of their daily needs. In the process of an open negotiation leading to a compromise decision, the capacity for abstract thinking and a vision of the future was created among many of the participants of the process. However, the majority of them were still concentrating on the immediate (mainly material and technical) needs, being primarily problem oriented. Because of the huge problems to be faced daily at the technical management unit level and the lack of a long term vision, it was difficult to introduce strategic programmes that have required participatory adaptation. For most of the local foresters a day-to day fulfilment of conventional quantitative plans was evidently still easier to understand and to assess. At the same time, more independent and free to express positions and pursue the ideas were the representatives of science and environmental NGOs, who were new actors in the process.

Capacity building is a precondition for quality participation

The experience of participation has been introduced, but not yet fully rooted. Finally the decision makers could continue to manage at the local level in the conventional way. Following the results of the forest policy evaluation, the forest ranger was declared as a «key-person of the forestry sector» responsible for all management decisions, but at the field level no important change could be noticed in the way the decisions are made even at the moment when the NFP was starting to

be implemented. This was, again, due to the lack of training for forest rangers and directors of forest management units (leshozes) in the new management procedures.

Once introduced from outside, participation does not immediately become a deliberate necessity

The idea of sharing the responsibilities for decision making was introduced and once accepted by the forestry administration. Nevertheless, it has not yet become a rule, or a deliberate necessity, required by the public or the stakeholders. The officials, in the best case, agreed to consult the «executors» for their opinion/ideas, or, just use the fact of consultation as an alibi for legitimacy, but were not yet ready for sharing the responsibility for the output of implementation. Participation of the lower levels in the hierarchy has been even used by the forest administration headquarters to block a trend towards an increase of the authority of regional offices. As a result, the executors, not really ready for changes, were convinced that the old way of decision making was less risky.

What can be learnt from participation in the forest policy process in Kyrgyzstan

This example of the first policy reform in Kyrgyzstan brings some highlights regarding what is participation at the national level, and draws some conclusions of general significance.

Democratic processes basically depend on political, cultural ethical and historical backgrounds. The quality of a deliberative process is highly determined by the readiness of the involved stakeholders to participate and debate expressed positions. The role of moderators/facilitators is essential as a guarantee of a balance and equity for all the expressed positions and stakes. The same stage of the process may be characterised by different types of participation. Participation may evolve over time, in the course of an iterative process which is basically moved by social and political learning. At the same time, the capacity for learning is determined by social power of participants and their status. More powerful participants with a higher hierarchical level have a better capacity for learning faster from the process and for instrumentalising the process for their own benefit. When deliberative practices are not yet rooted, there is an evident rupture between the participatory planning and top down controlled implementation. In the societies in transition, processes of changes occur with a different speed, frequency and logic compared to «stable» societies with a long culture of democracy. Due to the lack of experience, practice and democratic culture, also due to very high costs, deliberative processes for policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and adaptation can not be spontaneous in the countries in transition. There is a need for an external impulse and support. But, in any case, public participation does not guarantee that the final decision will consider the input from the process.

Summary

The formulation and implementation of a national forest policy is not a simple linear process of common discussions and negotiations because the permanently changing context requires a continuous adaptation of the involved stakeholders. The process of the forest policy reform in Kyrgyzstan (central Asia, a former USSR republic), based on participation, clearly shows two distinct periods: a first period of policy formulation

characterized by collaborative learning of the participants of the process; and the second period of policy implementation and adaptation, when the various stakeholders redefined their own strategies and roles. Although the process is still ongoing, this example demonstrates that participation is not only a procedure for deliberative democracy or collaborative learning, it is also a means for re-appropriation of power by the stronger stakeholders in a changing context.

Zusammenfassung

Die Entwicklung der Mitwirkung von Stakeholder-Gruppen im forstpolitischen Reformprozess in Kirgistan

Die Formulierung und Einführung einer nationalen Forstpolitik ist kein einfacher, linearer Prozess wie bei gewöhnlichen Gesprächen und Verhandlungen. Der ständig sich wandelnde Kontext erfordert eine kontinuierliche Anpassung der beteiligten Stakeholder. Der auf Mitwirkung gestützte Reformprozess der Forstpolitik in Kirgistan (Mittelasien, ehemalige Sowjetrepublik) zeigt deutlich zwei verschiedene Phasen: eine erste Phase der Ausgestaltung der Politik, die durch gemeinschaftliches Lernen der Mitbeteiligten gekennzeichnet ist, und eine zweite Phase der Anwendung und Anpassung der Politik, im Verlauf derer die verschiedenen Stakeholder-Gruppen ihre eigenen Strategien und Aufgaben umdefinieren. Obwohl der Prozess weiterhin läuft, veranschaulicht das Beispiel, dass Mitwirkung nicht nur ein Vorgehen der beratenden Demokratie oder ein gemeinschaftliches Lernen ist, sondern sie ist für die stärkeren Stakeholder auch ein Mittel zur Wiedererlangung der Macht in einem sich verändernden Kontext.

Übersetzung: MARGRIT IRNIGER

Résumé

Evolution de la participation des groupes d'intérêts au processus de réforme de la politique forestière au Kirgizstan

Formuler et mettre en œuvre une politique forestière nationale n'est pas un processus simple et linéaire à l'instar de simples discussions ou négociations. En effet, le contexte en perpétuel mouvement nécessite une adaptation continue de la part des parties intéressées. Le processus de réforme de la politique forestière du Kirgizstan (Asie centrale, ex-république de l'URSS), basé sur la participation, montre clairement deux phases distinctes. La première consiste à formuler la politique et est caractérisée par un apprentissage en commun de tous les participants. La deuxième concerne la mise en œuvre et l'adaptation de la politique, les différents groupes d'intérêts redéfinissant leurs propres stratégies et leur rôle. Bien que le processus soit encore en cours, l'exemple montre que la participation – en plus d'être une procédure de la démocratie consultative ou un apprentissage en commun – représente également, pour les parties intéressées les plus puissantes, un moyen de récupération du pouvoir dans un contexte en évolution.

Traduction: CLAUDE GASSMANN

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