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Participatory processes in forest management: The Italian experience in defining and implementing forest certification schemes

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1. Introduction

In member states of the European Union, participation now mainly refers to the public taking part in certain plans and programmes concerning the environment, as required for example by the new European Directives 2003/4/EC (on public access to environmental information) and 2003/35/EC (for public participation in drawing up of certain plans and programmes) and by the implementation of Agenda 21 Local Programmes (ICLEI 2001; APAT 2004; PETTENELLA & CARAZZAI 2004). Other European programmes, like LIFE, Nature 2000, for example, address public participation (PP), but at the moment the real involvement of public in planning and implementing actions is still limited. So far, in Italy, in addition to the above newly developed participation experiences, the existence of a quite large number of ancient community institutions should be noted, such as Regole, Comunalie, Partecipanze or Comunità (DUINKER & PULKKI 1998), in which the land is held as common property and all members are involved in decision-making procedures on the basis of very strict and complex rules.

In the forestry sector, the adoption of participatory approaches is often related to the implementation of forest certification systems. This is due to the fact that, in forest certification schemes, participation (i.e. stakeholders' consultation) is mandatory at different levels and stages: from the open, broad discussions on standards through a consensus-building process at international, national or local levels, down to the local, specific meetings for stakeholders' consultation organized by the certification body charged with assessing forest management operations at forest management unit level (FMUL) in order to issue the certificate. By applying forest certification schemes, the forestry sector is testing public participation in practice, thus becoming an important example for its application in other sectors.

2. General issues, theories and methodologies

Studies have been carried out to evaluate whether, how and to what extent various forest certification schemes meet basic democratic criteria and are thus suitable for a good governance system (CEPI 2001; CASHORE 2002; SHANNON 2003; FERN 2004). These studies have analysed general frameworks, goals, structures, internal organisation and functioning, as well as the most relevant actors of different forest certification schemes (among others the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)). Scheme implementation has integrative roles within a multilevel governance system, by vertically integrating global with local principles and by creating horizontal networks across actors and organisations at every level of government. In these circumstances, forest certification processes can play an important role in build-

ing governance institutions capacity by extending the reach of the public into the private sector interests.

It seems clear that, in certain cases, forest certification processes can provide opportunities for public participation – for instance, when all stakeholders are involved in the process of deciding on principles and corresponding standards for the sustainable management of forests. For the European Confederation of Forest Owners (CEPF), for example, it is reported that one of the objects of public participation¹ is the involvement in certification processes. Examples in different countries (e.g. Sweden, Canada, etc.) show that certification is helping to promote public interest in forest management (FAO/ECE/ILO 2000). Forest certification is also cited as one of the most important instruments for new forest governance, with the potential to fulfil one of the central ideas of «governance», i.e., civil society governing itself without the state getting involved or legitimization from the political authority (GLÜCK *et al.* 2004).

But, how and to what extent, does it work in practice? Do ongoing experiences confirm in practice what has been described in theory on the basis of the procedures and internal regulations defined by forest certification systems? How do these concepts apply to the context of forest policies in southern European countries, such as Italy, where the state has traditionally favored a top-down approach and the use of strong and effective command and control instruments to implement forest policies?

Empirically, it seems that, with the help of forest certification schemes, the forestry sector is implementing public participation in practice more widely and strongly than other sectors, thus testing the pros and cons and becoming an important example for its application in other arenas. This is the case of Canadian Standards Association (CSA) forest certification in Canada. Here, after defining a policy for sustainable forest management (SFM), the second step is to develop and introduce a participation process in a forest organisation that must be carried out in order to obtain certification under CSA rules. Implementation of a PP process as specified in the CSA standards² (CSA 2003) gives the public the opportunity for pro-active involvement in the management of a defined forest area.

¹ Other objects of public participation for CEPF are forest management plans at FMUL and subregional and national planning and policy making (i.e. Pan-European Process). CEPF is an observer and co-decider in various policy and planning processes throughout Europe.

² The basic requirements are that: (i) the organisation responsible for forest management under CSA certification scheme «shall establish and implement a PP process by either starting a new process, building on an existing process or reviving a previous process», recognising that the approach to PP may vary according to local circumstances; and (ii) the organisation «shall openly seek representation from a broad range of interested parties, ... and invite them to participate in developing the PP process itself, and provide interested parties with relevant background information». The CSA Standards define the basic operating rules for the process, its minimum contents and specific rules for communication.

In addition, it is worthwhile to highlight that other certification systems, such as the environmental management certification systems based on ISO 14001, or standards of measurement more strictly related to social aspects, such as the Social Accountability 8000 certification or the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations (FLO) certification, have not led to the same high levels of formalization and practice of PP as the ongoing practices in forestry.

A national research project named Ri.Selv.Italia³ is currently developing and testing a methodology to integrate SFM criteria and indicators and participatory approaches in forest management planning at regional level (e.g. a valley, a watershed, etc.).⁴ This method is being designed in order to be applied all over Italy's 21 regions and autonomous provinces. Among other things, the project aims to help forest owners and managers to design and implement their forest management plans with a view to obtaining forest certification. The new forest management plans based on this method will take into account all data and information needed to demonstrate that forest management practices effectively comply with selected SFM criteria and indicators.⁵ It is worthwhile noting that, in order to define a feasible method for implementing participatory processes in forest management planning, forest certification procedures for stakeholders' consultation are being taken into consideration as guidelines. Among the tools developed within the framework of the project, the first to be created will be a «methodological framework» (i.e., a procedurally well-defined participation process⁶) with basic operating rules, minimum contents and specific rules for communication. The second is the development of criteria and indicators to assess the public participation process: the examples available until now (DFID 1995, 2002; FAO 2005), on which the project work will be based, show that qualitative dimensions indicators are more significant than quantitative ones. By analyzing the Italian experience on the basis of these theories and studies, it is possible to: (i) empirically confirm (or not) the utility of employing some theoretical approaches in PP in forestry; (ii) clarify reasons of (possible) failures; and (iii) identify future research needs. In order to reach this objectives in the following sector 3, an initial framework is developed that describes the main driving forces of forest certification and public participation; in the following sector 4, the main four cases in which participatory approaches are required within forest certification processes are analyzed, based on some examples from Italy.

3. The driving forces of forest certification and public participation

Two major trends that characterize the current arena of forest governance debates are the increasing role of civil society at all levels (local, national and international), and the closely related but separated processes of globalisation and internationalization (ESSMANN *et al.* in press; GLÜCK *et al.* 2004) of both the economic system and the information network.

Public awareness of problems affecting forest resources such as deforestation, forest degradation, loss of biodiversity, illegal logging practices, social conflicts due to indigenous populations' unrecognised property rights, and related environmental problems at a global level such as climate changes, is growing. Evidence of this trend can also be found among consumers, whose demand is increasing for products from environmentally friendly and socially responsible production and trade.

The traditional command and control tools, implemented by governments or public authorities to address management practices and the behavior of both private corporations and

public organizations towards sustainable development, have proved to be only partially effective. Unfortunately, many examples exist worldwide of failures of command and control tools in preserving the environment, community rights or human health (OECD 1995; MARKANDYA *et al.* 2002). With an increasingly transnational economic system, not only the role in environmental and social policies of local institutions has progressively declined (GLÜCK *et al.* 2004), but also the possible reinforcement of existing legislation⁷ dealing with such issues requires good inter-sectoral vertical and horizontal coordination and seems difficult to realize in practice. As a consequence, with respect to forest resources management, there is a growing public demand for transparency, for assurances about wood raw materials origins, for sustainable exploitation and uses of forests, etc., which is pressing enterprises to adopt responsible behavior by establishing pro-active policies on ethical matters. In such a way enterprises do have better chances for growth and long-term business prospects, thanks to the support of consumers and other components of the civil society.

Third-party forest and timber certifications have become an important voluntary instrument implemented by private organisations (both profit and non-profit) or by national and local public authorities to demonstrate their ethical behavior with respect to forests problems. Differences exist between forest certification programmes, but at least some of them are clear examples of the general trend towards international private governance (CASHORE 2002; KIRTON & TREBILCOCK 2004).

Public credibility for forest certification programmes is based on rigorous procedures and rules, as well as on quality of public participation (PP) process. The main driving forces that influence participation in this context can be divided into three groups, referring to: 1) civil society; 2) regulation/institutional settings, together with system of democratic representation; and 3) alternative definitions of SFM (*figure 1*).

The capacity of civil society to be involved in PP in forest certification programmes depends on several factors. First of all, on local culture and tradition in participation, which in general terms can be stronger in industrialised countries where forestry has a relevant economic role (countries with high forest cover such as Canada, Austria, Sweden, etc.) and/or where consumers are sensitive to the importance of environmental and social sustainability of forest resources use worldwide (countries, even with low forest cover such as the UK, the

³ See www.progettobosco.it and www.ricercaforestale.it/riselvitalia/ (October 6, 2006).

⁴ The research project, launched in 2003, is still ongoing; about 30 scientists, experts and public forest officials are participating; 3 pilot tests will be carried out (in Molise, Sardegna and Basilicata regions) before Spring 2006. Ri.Selv.Italia is the first broad research at a national level on participation in forestry in Italy, following the initiatives in the forest certification field.

⁵ Four different sets of criteria and indicators have been considered: the regional FSC standards for forests and plantations of Italian Alpine regions; the national PEFC standards for Italian forests; the standards developed at national level by the Agency for Environment Protection and Technical Services (Agenzia per la Protezione dell'Ambiente e per i Servizi Tecnici - APAT); and the standards developed at national level by a research institute (Accademia Italiana di Scienze Forestali) for the Italian Mediterranean and Appennini's forests.

⁶ As mentioned, a relevant, advanced example of how far forest certification schemes can arrive in procedures for PP defining is the CSA system in Canada (CSA 2003). Also the experience of Catalunya National Forest Plan definition is taken into consideration. Initiatives are ongoing also in Slovenia and Sweden.

⁷ In order to combat illegal logging, for example, as recommended by the European Commission FLEGT Action Plan.

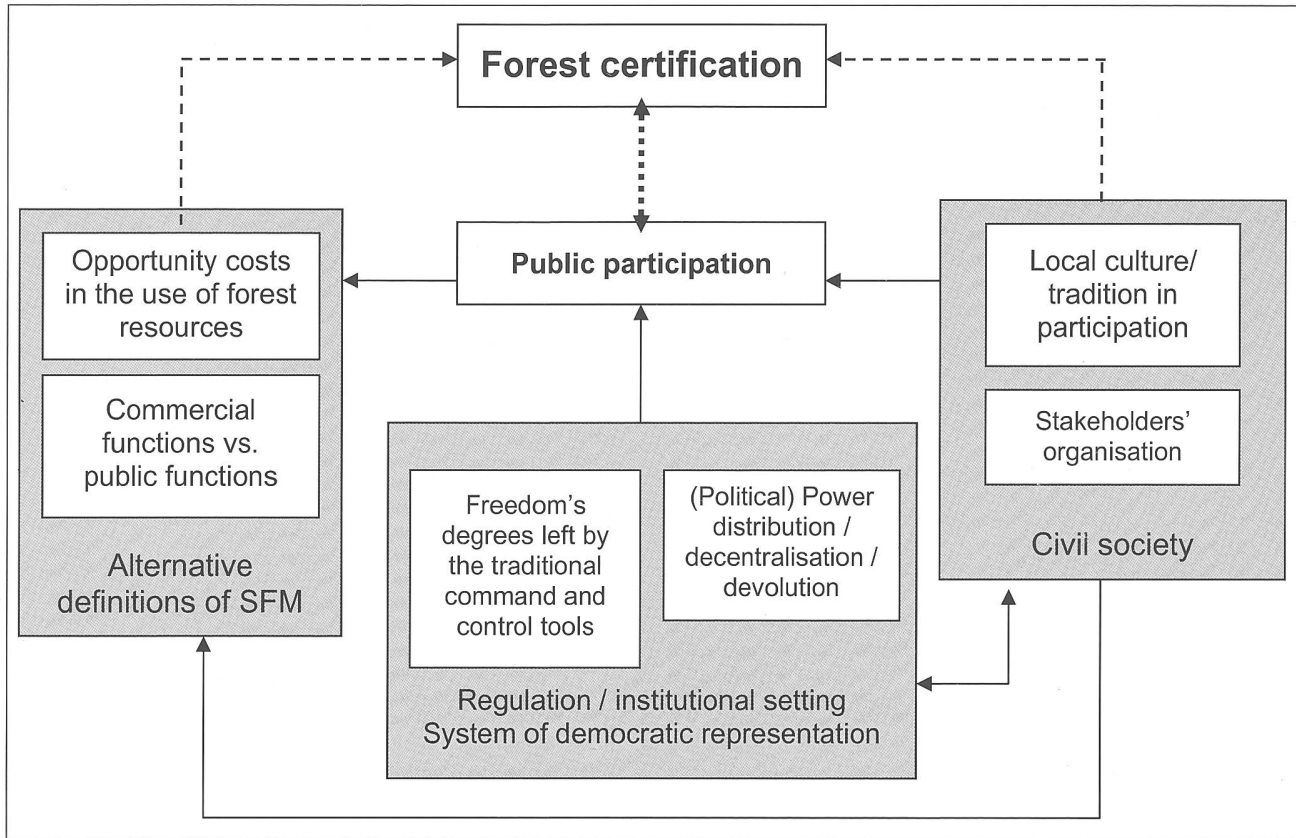


Figure 1: Driving forces of public participation and forest certification / participation links.

Netherlands, Denmark, etc., but with an informed and responsible public opinion). Another factor that influences PP in forest certification programmes is the level of stakeholders' organisation: the less well defined stakeholder structures are, i. e. poorly organized and networked groups, the more difficult it is for stakeholders to take on active roles in participation processes.

The regulation and institutional setting, as well as the system of democratic representation, are important to define the degrees of freedom left to civil society by the traditional command and control tools. In countries where strict regulations and laws on forest management already exist, the contents of PP in forest certification programmes might be rather limited – and thus only partially attractive to stakeholders. Moreover, where a system of democratic representation functions well, any process designed to directly involve the population in decision-making processes (including those related to forest certification mechanisms) can be perceived as a replacement of the system itself. In such circumstances, stakeholders might not be motivated to take part in PP or might doubt the effectiveness of such an exercise. Other regulation and institutional setting related factors are the (political) power distribution, i.e. the effects of decentralisation and devolution processes. They have a positive effect on PP, especially at local levels, if they are based on real political willingness and capacity at the centre to free up resources and to share decision-making power with the civil society actors at large. The consequences of a bottom-up approach in good quality PP in forest management and in forest certification are not always fully understood by politicians and public forest authorities.

In Italy, the lack or failure of participation is related to political, cultural and technical factors. One of the most important factors is the lack of a real power-devolution from traditional public forest authorities to the civil society in an international scenario which is progressively focusing on a «gover-

nance» instead of on a «government» approach. In accordance with the Agenda 21 Local Programmes experiences, when decision-makers understand that real participation requires the sharing of power with stakeholders, they rarely continue in the process by including and implementing ideas from the general public. How will traditional public authorities adapt to take into account the new demands of civil society and stakeholders towards forest resources management? The role of governments is of vital importance today, also within sustainable forest management and forest certification arenas (RAMETSTEINER 2000).⁸

A third group of factors is related to the definition of SFM, which can vary quite a lot depending on alternative expectations and needs expressed by stakeholders. These are linked to the prevailing functions of a defined forest area (commercial, for timber or NWFPs production, or public, for environmental and social services supply). Opportunity costs in the use of forest resources are usually taken into consideration in defining what SFM should be in a certain area. Of course, the characteristics of civil society in terms of PP and the alternative definitions of SFM, which can arise from a participation process in the context of forest certification, are strictly related to one another.

In some of the existing forest certification programmes at least, like FSC, procedures for assuring stakeholders' consultation are clearly defined and refer to different levels and mechanisms (internal organisational structure with a special voting power distribution, openly publicized national and regional standard-setting processes and others; SHANNON 2003).

⁸ Governments – significant actors for certification of sustainable forest management. UNECE/FAO policy forum reviews roles of governments. Geneva, October 4, 2005, see: http://www.unece.org/press/pr2005/05tim_p07e.htm (October 6, 2006).

4. Four cases for participation in forest certification: Examples from Italy

In forest certification schemes participation is required to various extents, depending on different schemes, at least in the four circumstances briefly described hereafter: a) in standards-setting processes; b) in developing a forest management system that complies with SFM standards at FMUL; c) as part of forest management assessment carried out by an accredited body to issue certificates; and d) in organising and managing a forest management «group certification» (NUSSBAUM 2002).

At the moment, FSC and PEFC are the two forest certification systems that operate at international levels and which are proposing sets of principles, criteria and indicators to be used as a basis for assessing forest management performances at FMUL.

FSC, a non governmental initiative, has developed principles and criteria for SFM of forests and plantations to be applied worldwide, which have to be specified at local levels using indicators defined by national or regional initiatives. FSC is considered to be one of the closest types of ideal non-state market driven instruments for forest governance, with no support from traditional governing institutions (state or other public authorities are excluded from FSC decision-making) and a quasi-legislative structure defining qualities of a strong governance system (SHANNON 2003; GLÜCK *et al.* 2004). However, the creation in 1993 of such a new forest policy instrument to enhance the role of the population and curtail the actions and reduce the role of traditional, key target groups (governments and local public forest authorities, and, to some extent, also forest owners and industrial forest enterprises), led to the establishment of competing certification programmes. This was one of the reasons why forest owners and the wood industry launched PEFC in 1998, with the explicit (or implicit) support of some governmental and public forest agencies. The extent to which traditional governing capacities are used, and the amount of policy networks needed to support forest certification programmes are generally underestimated (GLÜCK *et al.* 2004). «Only the FSC takes very seriously the necessity of a rigorous approach to representative participation, because it assumes that political legitimacy is the primary need in the standard-setting process» (SHANNON 2003), while the PEFC relies on political definitions of interests already expressed in public agencies, lobbying groups and interest groups within the European (and now also extra-European) political systems.

a) Participation in standard-setting processes

Participation is required during the development and definition of SFM standards⁹ at international, national or regional levels to provide basic rules for forest management and certification. According to SHANNON (2003), this is representative participation, not unlike a public policy making process such as in the case of international standards for SFM developed by intergovernmental initiatives in different regions worldwide (Pan-European process, Montreal process, Tarapoto process, etc.); or even in the case of national standards developed by governments as a basis for national forest and timber certification programmes (CSA in Canada, SFI in United States, MTCC in Malaysia, Lembaga Indonesia, etc.).

SFM principles and criteria developed by intergovernmental processes are used as a basis to monitor forest resources on a large scale; as general principles, they cannot normally be used for assessing forest management practices for the pur-

pose of forest certification at FMUL. For that, specific indicators for auditing forest management performances at FMUL are needed. Depending on the scale on which the standards-setting process is carried out, interested parties vary and have different decision-making powers and capacities to influence the process.

In Italy, the National Initiatives of the two main certification schemes were both established in 2001, but FSC started its activity in the country through a National Contact Person already in 1999. FSC-Italy includes 60 members, representatives of all interested parties and individuals, which are divided into the 3 main chambers of the FSC system plus an additional one, the Observers' Chamber, where public forest authorities are accepted (without voting rights, but with the possibility of actively taking part in work-in-progress). The FSC Standards for SFM of Italy's forests and plantations in the Alpine regions were set up by the means of several meetings and electronic consultation (mainly by emails in order to collect comments on the draft standards versions).

Through the FSC initiative, the Italian forestry sector has begun to experience public participation. For the first time, public forest authorities, forest owners and their associations, wood working industries, traders, forest officials, environmental organisations, forest workers unions, associations for international cooperation, forest and environmental experts, the Italian Agency for the protection of the environment, certification bodies, research institutes, consumers and others meet to debate forestry issues. This new mode of forest governance necessarily led local public forest authorities and agencies to deal with new problems and challenges: among others, sharing decision-power in defining SFM with new, non-professional forest actors (like the environmentalists). Some of them (e.g. public officials from the north-eastern regions, where the forest administration traditionally plays a leading role in policy setting and implementation), felt uncomfortable with this new scenario, and, in order to maintain direct control over forest resources management and a relevant role on the forestry arena, decided to create the PEFC national initiative. PEFC-Italy, which has been active since 2001, currently has 45 members, mainly representatives of public forest owners and their associations, public forest authorities and wood industries. PEFC-Italy has no support from any environmental organisations yet, while it has been (and still is) strongly supported by public forest administrations through funding, communication initiatives, creation of groups of forest owners with the technical and financial assistance from the regions, etc. SFM standards were developed through a stakeholders' consultation process – on the basis of «one person, one vote» approach, after several meetings, an experts' panel and electronic consultation – where environmentalists' points of view were almost lacking, and the role of «traditional» foresters was central. On the other side, PEFC-Italy has been able to develop SFM standards for poplar plantations with an active participation in the discussion of private poplar growers. On the contrary, while at the very beginning FSC-Italy was able to attract all different stakeholders groups, than PEFC creation has led to some forest owners, wood processing industries and forest public administrations leaving the FSC initiative. In both cases, a limited proactive participa-

⁹ The most important standards developed by the means of a participation process are SFM standards, but in some cases participation is used also for chain-of-custody standards, trademark use regulations, accreditation procedures, internal structure and functioning procedures, etc.

tion was recorded in forums and discussions for defining SFM standards.

Finally, it is also worthwhile to mention two significant initiatives carried out in Italy for the development of SFM standards: (i) the so-called «Milano Forum», a voluntary forum launched in 1997 by a group of scientists from the Universities of Padua and Turin, for the development of SFM standards for regions in northern Italy; and (ii) the so-called SAM («Standard Appenninici e Mediterranei») initiative, launched in 2003 by the Accademia Italiana di Scienze Forestali and based in Florence, for the development of SFM standards for central and southern Italy. For both initiatives, the main goal was to provide SFM standards – as a common basis – for the different forest certification schemes. The level of participation (especially when based on electronic public consultation) was relatively low in both cases.

b) Participation in developing a forest management system that complies with SFM standards at FMUL

Some of the certification programmes also require stakeholders' consultation during the development of a forest management system designed to comply with SFM standards. This means that forest owners and forest managers responsible for forest management planning and for forest operations have to take into consideration stakeholders' points of view about different issues related to the specific forest management system for a certain FMU. When planning and implementing its forest management system, the forest organization should: i) carry out communication initiatives to inform local stakeholders of its plans and intentions; information should be easily accessible to every interested party; ii) develop and implement procedures to ensure that stakeholders' comments are properly taken into consideration in forest management planning and implementation; iii) provide dispute-resolution mechanisms in order to reach consensus and resolve conflicts. This is how SHANNON (2003) defines public and community participation, which occurs as part of the implementation and enforcement processes of forest certifications. As already mentioned, public and community participation are different in each of the two international certification systems (e.g., participation is more structured and a basic requirement in FSC). The most significant difference, however, concerns local stakeholders. For example, at local levels, forest workers are key stakeholders and providers of information in their forest enterprise (FAO/ECE/ILO 2000). Workers' Unions are reported to influence certification processes in order to meet the core requirements of ILO Conventions.

Few examples of such cases are available in Italy so far, where only 6 forests are FSC certified (about 15500 ha). It is worthwhile to mention the case of Bosco di Piegaro (Umbria region), a 160 ha privately owned, oak and other broadleaves, coppice forests. In order to obtain the FSC certification, the forest managers developed an *ad hoc* forest management plan, which was submitted to the attention of local stakeholders for comments. The participation process was not overly successful and the level of public and community participation very low. The lack of a cultural tradition of local-level participation, together with the fact that it was one of the first experiences of this kind in Italy, may have been possible factors for scarce participation. The capacity of the local forest authority to actively take part in the process was also limited, because the forest administration had in any case to follow the ordinary, legally-defined procedures – based on the traditional command and control approach – in approving forest

owners' activities. Another interesting case is that of the Monti Simbruini pilot project for FSC forest group certification. Three communal forest properties and an association of forest workers and owners were involved in the project. In order to develop a forest management plan in line with the SFM standards, two stakeholders' consultation meetings were held: participation decreased after the first such, when a heated debate revealed conflicting ideas of the forest managers and the local section of WWF. The certification process is no longer proceeding.

As regards PEFC-Italy, since the beginning of October 2005, a new requirement has been introduced for involving stakeholders in presentation of individual and group forest certifications, but no practical examples are available so far.

c) Participation as part of forest management assessment carried out by an accredited certification body for issuing a certificate

FSC and other national forest certification programmes require stakeholders' consultation during the preliminary assessments and/or the certification assessment of forest organisation's performances in order to issue the certificate. In these cases, the accredited certification body is responsible for the organisation and implementation of the stakeholders' consultation. The purpose is to verify whether forest management has taken stakeholders' points of view sufficiently into account while developing the forest management system, whether any groups of stakeholders disagree with the forest organisation choices and ways of operating or whether unsolved conflicts exist. If, during this consultation phase, relevant problems are recorded that cannot be resolved within a reasonable timeframe, the certificate cannot be issued.

Analogous considerations are valid, as for the previous case b. Only few practical examples are so far available in Italy, mainly related to FSC scheme. Generally, stakeholders' consultations have been professionally organised by certification bodies' experts. Each FSC accredited certification body is free to choose the means it employs to consult with stakeholders (direct interviews, phone interviews, open meetings, etc.), but procedures, documents and timetables for carrying out the consultation have to have prior approval from the FSC Accreditation Unit. This assures, at least potentially, that participation processes are well defined and rigorously applied. However, even then, as practical experiences have shown, participation remains low: Stakeholders in Italy's forestry sector do not seem ready to take on an active role, and measures aimed at motivating stakeholders have delivered poor results.

d) Participation in organising and managing a «group certification»

Also in forest group certification, stakeholders' consultation is required both as part of the forest management (case b) and as part of the certification process (case c). Relevant examples in Italy are available for both FSC and PEFC certification. The Consorzio Forestale Xiloiemprese, a mixed private and public forests consortium (14 private and 3 public owners, with a total certified forest area of 1800 ha), obtained FSC certification in 2004. During the stakeholders' consultation process, limited participation was recorded of external, national level stakeholders. By contrast, local and internal stakeholders' participation was fairly good. In such cases, one professional forest manager, with no special skills or experience with regard to participation methods, implemented the participatory approach.

As in other countries, PEFC forest group certification in Italy usually involves large areas and high numbers of forest owners. In the autonomous province of Bolzano (Trentino Alto-Adige region) about 22 300 forest owners with a total area of more than 250 600 ha are certified under the umbrella of the local farmers' association, while in the Veneto region, 27 forest owners (mainly public) hold a total certified area of 35 190 ha. In practice, not all members of certain groups participated, as some of the forest owners were not aware of being part of the group.

Within the framework of both forest management group certification schemes, it is worthwhile to consider the internal group members as shareholders. This approach requires participation procedures that are internally implemented in group management to be thoroughly analysed with special emphasis on the adoption of instruments of democratic participation and voting, as well as on communication and information tools.

Table 1 gives a summary representation of the main results of the empirical analysis of the Italian experiences on participation in forest certification and related processes.

5. Comments and conclusions

The main results of the empirical analysis of the Italian experiences reveal several relevant problems in implementing proper participation processes. In general, participation processes are roughly organised and poor-participated, with a total failure of on-line consultations (electronic fora on special web sites), even in cases where these tools have been used to limit costs. Other problems are similar to those encountered all over the world when it comes to public participation: (i) participation is seen as too time-consuming and costly; (ii) there is too little motivation for stakeholders to take part; (iii) there is a low representative capacity for at least some of the stakeholder groups (e.g. forest workers); (iv) low participation level is sometimes related to low levels of technical and scientific knowledge about some forest management related issues (the role of experts and scientists is overvalued); (v) in general, there is a lack of communication and coordination between central, national level stakeholders and local stakeholders (e.g. forest owners associations at national level were involved in the process, but single private forest owners in the interested areas were not properly informed and updated about the participation initiative).

Table 1: Examples in Italy: a final synthesis.

Case for participation in forest certification	Instruments developed for participation	Strengths/weaknesses	Major open questions
a) in standards-setting processes	Periodical meetings plus electronic consultation (Fora, discussions, Intranet connections, mailing lists, etc.).	Limited involvement of stakeholders with no or limited access to electronic connection. In some cases, difficulty in identifying and recognized «representatives» (in international, national and local processes).	Clear reasons for motivating national stakeholders to take part in the processes need to be identified. Effective and low-cost instruments for real participation need to be developed.
b) in developing a forest management system which complies with SFM standards at FMUL	Meetings, communication initiatives at local levels (local newspapers, brochures, posters in public places, etc.).	Lack of traditional participation culture at local levels. Command and control approach still prevalent among local public forest authorities.	Public forest authorities with competencies to approve and monitor forest management plans must rethink their role within society as a whole.
c) as part of forest management assessment carried out by an accredited certification body for issuing a certificate	Meetings, direct interviews, phone calls, questionnaire surveys.	Lack of information, low levels of knowledge about and interest in forests among local stakeholders not directly involved in forestry: limited stakeholders' motivation. Good opportunities to spread information about forestry outside the «forestry world»; to improve environmental, social, educational and cultural scenarios at local levels.	New competencies are required of «traditional foresters» for public communication and stakeholders' consultation procedures. Clear reasons need to be identified to motivate stakeholders to actively take part in discussions. Schedules are required that allow enough time to improve the understanding, acceptance and application of participation.
d) in organising and managing a forest «group certification»	Internal meetings, internal communication and information systems (letters, documents, mailing lists, etc.).	Limited participation of external, national stakeholders. Significant participation of local and internal stakeholders.	Role of the group members (shareholders) need to be better defined. Democratic participation and communication systems need to be established.

At least some of these problems were a direct consequence of a lack of knowledge of concepts and methods regarding approach and implementation of public participation and stakeholders' consultation in practice, and resources needed for proper implementation. In the cases analysed, participation was introduced without the support of professional skills and competences, thus partly negatively conditioning the quality of the process itself.

Another key factor that influences PP lies within the cultural and political context. In Italy, as in many other Mediterranean countries, recent experiences of direct democracy in managing land resources in rural areas are very limited. Demographic and economic factors have favored an active role of public authorities in land use control to prevent soil erosion, the over-exploitation of wood resources and over-grazing in the forests. By contrast, private operators tend to assume a passive attitude in managing their resources. A change in these attitudes is not to be expected in the short term.

Nevertheless, despite all the reservations and difficulties, forest certification is, without a doubt, the first practical chance the Italian forestry sector has recently had to deal with participation. Until now forest certification represents the most advanced and structured experience in Italy on this topic, even if it has been limited to only one feature of participation, namely that of stakeholder consultation. In this regard, it might be considered a «Trojan Horse» for introducing public participation into forest policies.

Summary

In member states of the European Union, and in accordance with directives issued by the EU, participatory approaches are increasingly being implemented in activities related to urban planning and environmental resources management, including those in the forestry sector. Here, the adoption of participatory approaches is often related to forest certification. This is also the case in Italy, where the most advanced and structured experiences of public participation are strictly linked to the development and implementation of forest certification schemes, even if this is limited to the aspect of stakeholder consultation. With an empirical analysis of some case studies the paper identifies possible links between forest certification processes and different levels of public participation and is divided into four main parts. The first presents the theoretical background, the most relevant issues and the methodologies. The second and third parts describe the driving forces of and the main connections between participation and forest certification, respectively. The fourth part presents some final comments and conclusions that aim at enhancing public participation in forest certification processes.

Résumé

Processus de participation dans la gestion des forêts. Expériences faites en Italie lors de la définition et de l'introduction de systèmes de certification forestière.

Dans les pays membres de l'Union Européenne et en accord avec les directives instaurées par l'EU, les approches participatives ont été de plus en plus appliquées aux activités en relation avec la planification et la gestion des ressources environnementales y compris à celles du secteur forestier. Dans le secteur de l'économie forestière, le choix d'un processus participatif est souvent lié à la certification. En Italie également, la plupart des expériences faites au niveau de la participation publique ont été réalisées dans le développement et l'introduction de systèmes de certification forestière, même si cette manière de

procéder se limite à la consultation des représentants de groupes d'intérêts. L'analyse empirique de quelques études de cas a permis d'identifier des liens possibles entre les processus de certification forestière et les niveaux de participation publique. L'article décrit le contexte théorique, les faits principaux, la méthodologie, les forces motrices et les principales relations entre la participation et la certification forestière. La dernière partie présente des commentaires et des conclusions dans le but d'améliorer la participation publique dans les processus de certification forestière.

Traduction: CLAUDE GASSMANN

Zusammenfassung

Mitwirkungsprozesse im Waldmanagement: Erfahrungen aus Italien beim Definieren und Einführen forstlicher Zertifizierungssysteme

In EU-Staaten und in Übereinstimmung mit den Richtlinien der EU werden partizipatorische Ansätze zunehmend in der Stadtplanung, im Ressourcenmanagement und ebenso im forstwirtschaftlichen Sektor – besonders in der Waldzertifizierung – angewendet. Auch in Italien sind am meisten Erfahrungen mit öffentlicher Mitwirkung, zwar beschränkt auf die Konsultierung von Interessenvertretern, in der Entwicklung und Einführung von forstlichen Zertifizierungssystemen gemacht worden. Über die empirische Analyse einiger Fallstudien werden mögliche Verbindungen zwischen Waldzertifizierungsprozessen und Ebenen der öffentlichen Mitwirkung ermittelt. Beschrieben werden der theoretische Hintergrund, die wichtigsten Sachverhalte, die Methodologie, die treibenden Kräfte sowie die wichtigsten Verbindungen von Mitwirkung und Waldzertifizierung. Abschliessend werden Kommentare gemacht, Lehren gezogen und offene Fragen formuliert mit dem Ziel, öffentliche Mitwirkung im Rahmen der Waldzertifizierung zu fördern.

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