

Summary of the paper 'Democratic implications of NMG

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INTRODUCTION

What are democratic implications of NMG?

The aim of this paper is to (1) develop framework for analysing this question, and (2) apply it to a case of NMG, the National Park Pilot process in Denmark.

THEORY

Two democracy perspectives applied:

There has been a century long development in understandings of democracy. Here, we distinguish between two main approaches to democracy:

Representative democracy:

Deliberative (or participatory) democracy:

From the deliberative democracy perspective, NMG enriches democracy by increasing opportunities for stakeholders to take part in and influence decision making (and hence identify with the decision made). Through deliberative processes it is possible to establish confidence, trust and consensus among actors with opposing views and interests. New, active and able citizens are recruited and empowered to take part in policy making.

From the representative democracy perspective, NMG undermines representative democracy (equal access to vote who should decide) and the sovereign role of the State, for instance because the distinction between State and citizens becomes blurred, whereby citizen rights are endangered. Networks depend on consensus and cannot handle conflicts and opposing interests. Therefore, minorities tend to get marginalised. The same is true to those who have no resources or time to participate.

The resulting analytical framework poses four questions to the policy process in case:

1. Did it give more opportunities to participate?
 - a. Or only used by resourceful, increasing inequality?
2. New stakeholders? And empowerment?
 - a. Or just reinforcing the political elite?
3. Did trust and networking take place? Consensus-building?
 - a. Or were some excluded because networks cannot contain conflict?
4. Was representative democracy undermined?
 - a. Weakening the elected representatives ability to control?
 - b. Undermining the separation between legislation and execution

METHODS

Case: NPP – an embedded case of network governance in the shadow of the hierarchy

Methods: Interviews, document analysis, survey of process

FINDINGS

YES, More opportunities to participate

- new to have a local process on nature politics
- new to have process with a combination of interest & sociodem. Representation, with elements of deliberation (citizen summit)
- new to give local stakeholders legitimate access to voice opinion over use of agricultural areas for rural development & nature, not just as areas for food production

But

- not open access at all stages. Initial scoping of NPP areas was restricted to agriculture and municipal mayors, i.e. unequal access

YES, New, active stakeholders

- New to have mayors engage in nature. Formerly beyond their jurisdiction & interest. County regulated passively by spatial planning, practically farm areas (60%) were ruled by rationales of agricultural production via Min. of Agriculture & EU. With structural reform, nature policy is the jurisdiction of municipalities.

But

- Process still dominated by ‘usual suspects’: elderly, men, well-educated, NGO-repres.
- Aim to involve ‘ordinary citizen’ but difficult – does she exist?
- Methods affect repr: invitation for citizen summit ensure equal gender representation.
- Agriculture had de facto veto right and lobby (minority protection or rule of the elite?)
- Outdoor council used access to national football polls to influence agenda setting

So to some extent the process was mainly used by resourceful (‘political elite’) not increasing equality

YES, empowerment in the sense of awareness of role of rural areas in shaping everyday lives

- New for broad group to get access to voice opinion on farm areas, cf. above.
- But in terms of political efficacy (knowing contents and knowing how, perceiving responsiveness) difficult to judge with the material we have.

Were trust and networks established – consensus-building?

Ideal of deliberation, cf. Habermas of the ‘ideal speech situation’, set aside power relations (equal), set aside particular interests (open minded). Does this work?

- Yes, partly, informants expressing it was a good process

But – some(thing) were excluded because networks cannot contain conflict

- Difficult for networks to deal with minorities: Agriculture felt squeezed out (or they maybe deliberately tried to obstruct the process)
- Framing the NPP to exclude some fundamental conflicts: a) NPs are not only of local, but of legitimate, national interest, b) By only focusing on NPP the contents moved –from nature conservation to diversity of interests (rural development, tourism, agriculture...). c) From the Wilhelm Committee outset it was not only about NPP but about nature conservation as

such. This was screened out. And a reason why political opposition argued that NPP was merely a PR stunt for Government to take away focus from budget cuts and need to implement HD and WFD.

- Strategic participation by many stakeholders (National: Agriculture, Tourism, Transport, but also local, e.g. perception that agriculture repr. Mainly participated to defend interests.
- In a deliberation perspective it is problematic to based steering groups on interest representation, because difficult to set aside ones interests in dialogue. Solution: replace argumentation by, e.g. narratives to give voice to new understandings. Because the strength of interest representation is that it gives legitimacy, whereas, e.g. participants in citizen summit are accountable to no one but themselves.
- In a repr.dem. perspective it was a weakness that participants could ignore financial and distributional consequences, who pays/benefits, although the good intention was to allow for 'free thought'. But the effect was uncertainty among particularly affected (agriculture) as to the outcome of the process, causing them to engage sceptically and, eventually leave process. And also to ENV stakeholders, this was problematic: are we giving legitimacy to a solution that is not financially sustainable, leading to insufficient nature conservation?

NO representative democracy was not undermined

The NPP was input to draft Act to be adopted by the Parliament. As such, it did not weaken the elected representatives' ability to control.

And as mayors participated, this can be considered a democratic strengthening from 'below', as they are accountable to their constituents (voters).

It did not undermine the separation between legislation and execution, as it was input to policy-formulation, not implementation.

But

- Uneven access to participate over time –
- Equity: participants had unequal resources (time, money), e.g. professional NGOs vs. spare time repr. of rural development groups, and Outdoor Council with funds, Agriculture with strong lobby org. and whole ministry of Agr. to support them
- Legitimacy: interest based legitimacy ok, but were citizens broadly unaware of the process?
- Accountability: mayors accountable to voters, NGOs to members, participants in summit not to anyone but themselves
- Uncertainty about process outcome made some feel they HAD to participate to make sure their interests were taken care of – i.e. the general critic to a deliberative democracy based on 'right to participate', where democracy becomes an end in itself – but does it mean we need to be full time participants?
- The role of the NFNA? ...

CONCLUSIONS

Democracy implications of NMG, the case of NPP, depends on perspective

From representative democracy:

Potential threat to undermine authority of elected politicians. But here NPP served as input to policy process by Parliament, so okay.

From deliberative democracy:

A number of efforts towards deliberation (combination of interest based repr. versus broad involvement, combination of workshops and meetings),

It engaged new stakeholders, particularly

It did challenge existing power relations over use of country side – from Agriculture having more or less monopoly to define agricultural land as spaces of production only -to giving non-agricultural stakeholders legitimate access to question this monopoly and, first attempts at articulating ideas and visions related to an alternative understanding of the country side.

but still impeded by

- traditional focus on interest based representation – hard to innovate? Use ‘narratives’?
- lack of explicitly outlining deliberation rules of the game (except in citizen summit)
- NFNA metagoverning heavily in terms of setting the frames for discussion
- difficulty handling minority viewpoints, represented by agriculture

Skewed representation (although wasn't critical as it was only input to policy process):

- ‘usual suspects’: elderly men, NGO – the particularly interested
- exclusion of people living outside NPP-areas from deliberation over *national* parks, as pre-selection of areas took place in closed process between MoE, mayors and agriculture.
- ignorance of financial aspects created uncertainty of process outcome and hereby affected process negatively (agriculture hesitating to participate, Env. NGOs afraid to legitimise unsustainable solutions)
- NPP stimulated a nature policy discussion ,albeit it took away focus from other, maybe more effective options for nature conservation

Restrictions: NPP was a restricted form of NMG, in the shadow of the hierarchy (of the MoE).

Was the distinction between representative and deliberative democracy useful?

-Yes, the two perspectives helped to identify weaknesses and strengths of network governance, e.g. inability of networks to deal with minority viewpoints.

-Yes, the case illustrated that evaluation of ‘success’ and a ‘successful design’ depends on underlying understanding of democracy.

Future design of pp-process should explicitly take this into account, in outlining the underlying democracy assumptions for the design (for instance different pp methods allow for representation and deliberation to various degrees, cf. Hansen (2000)).

And in network processes, whether ‘participation’ in bureaucracy, or a network with metagovernance, there should explicitly be made room for a discussion among participants about: what is democracy – what would *we* prefer – and what would that imply in terms of the ‘rules of the game’ in this process?