

Participatory Environmental Governance in the European Union

The Case of the No Net Loss Initiative

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Rationale

The EU Commission advocates more participation in democratic processes, but does the Commission use its participatory governance tools in a genuine, inclusive and transparent way? To what extent – if any – can participatory measures have an impact on environmental policy-making?

Research Question

How and to what extent were Environmental NGOs as stakeholders involved in the consultations and developments concerning the EU initiative on No Net Loss of Ecosystems and their Services?

Research Design & Methodology

- Literature Research
- Five Systematizing Expert Interviews (by Bogner and Menz 2009) with members of Environmental NGOs: Two participants of the NNL-WG, one person very much involved in the process surrounding the NNL initiative, two persons familiar with participatory processes at the EU level
- Method of Analysis: Summarizing Content Analysis (by Mayring 2014)

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Findings

- Consultation processes appear to be genuine, but are more about tweaking the proposal than introducing new ideas; Commission wanted to hear ideas to improve biodiversity offset legislation, was not interested in hearing alternatives
- Working groups are being used by the Commission and the Environmental NGOs to exchange information, but offer no potential to change policy proposals fundamentally; Environmental NGOs try to influence policy-making from the outside with the information gathered from within
- Online consultations are surprisingly momentous and have the potential to have a huge impact on policy proposals since the Commission takes their results genuinely into account
- Negative attitude towards biodiversity offsetting schemes by the Environmental NGOs during the consultation process and by the EU civil society voiced in the online consultation achieved halting the NNL initiative altogether, resulting in it currently being developed as a voluntary guideline
- Suggestions for improvements: drafting policy proposals should be more inclusive; stakeholders should be consulted earlier; Commission should be more open to consider alternative approaches; decision-making process after the consultations should be more transparent

Target Audience for this Study

Social-, Political- and Environmental Scientists, Policy- and Decision Makers, Non-Governmental and International Organizations