

Lifescape – Implementing European Landscape Convention in the South Baltic Region

Good afternoon. My name is Per Blomberg and I live in Lund in Southern Sweden. I have been coordinator for one partner, the City of Lund, in the LIFEscape project and I am author of the Handbook on participative Landscape Planning, one of the main results from the Project.

This presentation will give some background to the LIFEscape project, some examples from the work in the Swedish Pilot area and an introduction to the handbook.

The LIFEscape project was conducted between 2011 and 2014. There were eight partners from four Countries in the project. The lead partner and initiator, Elblag Landscape Park in Polen, worked together with the municipality Tolkmiko in the Elblag landscape park as a pilot area. In Lithuania Klaipeda university and Zemaitija national park worked together in the National park. In Denmark Slagelse municipality worked in the Tude å valley. In south Sweden the two municipalities Lund and Sjöbo worked together in a shared pilot area in the Vomb valley. There was a third Swedish partner the Linnaeus University in Kalmar who studied the view of landscape and how it differs between different groups of stakeholders and in different countries. There were also several associated partners on national and regional level responsible for the European Landscape Convention, for example the National Heritage Board in Sweden and Mr Leif Gren who is here today.

In the Vomb valley pilot area in South Sweden we had the intension to make a landscape analysis in cooperation between the two municipalities and together with the stakeholders. This analysis should be used as important information in the formal general plans for the municipalities in the future. But who are the stakeholders in the area? We spent some time trying to find out the different stakeholders in the area and how to reach them. We wanted a good representation from different groups. We did not expect the stakeholders to come to the town hall and discuss so we had to go to where the stakeholders are and meet them there in the pilot area. We started to invite the stakeholders to an Open space meeting and together find out the topics that are of interesting in the area and how we should work together. Maybe some of you have tried the Open Space concept. It is a form of meeting where the stakeholders themselves decide what to discuss in the groups and also to do the documentation together with the staff from the municipality. We also had a process facilitator to arrange the meeting so that planners and managers should meet stakeholders on more equal terms.

The most important in the participative planning is to build confidence between the local authority and the stakeholders. It is hard to build confidence and easy to destroy. We spent almost a year building up the confidence before we started the dialog about the planning issues. During this period we had a lot of meetings to inform and get information about the different values in the area. Like this meeting (photo) where we looked under the surface in the small river and had exciting activities together. After the excursion we arranged a barbeque and talked about the values and threats to the river in the landscape. The exciting activities and food was what we could give the stakeholders for their time and engagement. We also had several meetings about the cultural heritage in the area where stakeholder brought old photos and maps to share experiences and knowledge.

The second stage was to arrange two workshops where we made SWOT analysis on the area and discussed what changes and preservation that was in the interest of the stakeholders. The planners collected all the information for the landscape analysis and presented it to the stakeholders on a

third workshop to get feedback on the proposal. Then finally we arranged a big gathering in a huge tent in the middle of the landscape and invited all who had taken part in the project to share the results and celebrate the achievement we had done together.

The Handbook on participative landscape planning consists of the experiences we got in the LIFEscape project and recommendations from Danish researchers and the Swedish association for local and regional authorities. Because we were both planners in municipalities and managers at protected areas in the project the handbook was written for both groups. Many of the tools and methods in the handbook are general and can be used in many situations when authorities and stakeholders want to interact.

The presentation is built around the Participation Ladder and the different levels of participation. To go higher up on the ladder demands more engagement and also more time and resources. Before the participative actions we recommend some tools and methods for preparation. We do not present the lowest levels with manipulation and neglecting but start at information that is a very important topic.

Before the authorities start the participative process there are several preparations to be done, define the stakeholders, to collect data and knowledge, to find the right tools and methods and build confidence with the stakeholders. Most stakeholders are satisfied to get information and there are several ways to reach the stakeholders. Some stakeholders get interested in the topic and want's to get more engaged. The next level is then consultation where the authorities ask the stakeholders for information or opinion. On the dialog level we get more interaction between the authorities and stakeholders. When we come to participation the stakeholders are very engaged and share a lot of time in the process.

In some cases we can let the stakeholder to take part in the decisions on the level we call co-decision. It is also possible to hand over the power completely to the stakeholder for both planning and management. In this case it is needed some kind of democratic structure in the stakeholder organization.

Finally I can see some important challenges in the participative planning process. For me the interaction with stakeholders isn't the big challenge but to get the support within the organization, municipality or regional authority. You need an honest commitment from all levels and time and resources to conduct the interaction. You need to create confidence with the stakeholders and it's important to find the right ambassadors in the stakeholder networks to be successful. The participative planning and management process needs to have new skills that planners and managers normally do not have. Either they need training or you have to get help from professionals with communication skills. You also have to be prepared to handle conflicts because there are always different opinions. An early and honest interaction with the stakeholders will decrease the risk for conflicts.

More information on the LIFEscape project can be found on the project homepage.

Thank you very much!