

Public participation in forest management : Experiences, perceptions and expectations of social economy organizations

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Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Bridging, Bonding, and Building



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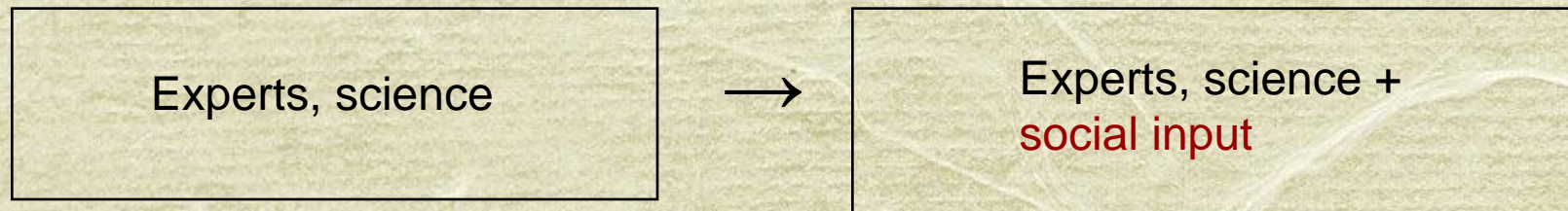
Chaire des caisses populaires acadiennes
en gestion des coopératives

Background

In New Brunswick, public forest represents ½ of the forestland.

Forest industries (Licences) are responsible for forest management planning and operations on public forest, following guidelines from the provincial government.

Since the 1990's, an increased number of **public participation** process have been implemented throughout the province.



Public participation



Mechanisms intentionally instituted **to involve** the lay **public** or their representatives in administrative **decision-making**

(Beierle and Cayford 2002)

Eg.: advisory committees and public hearings

Opportunity for individuals, communities and interest groups to **exchange** information, **articulate their interest** and to have to **potential to influence decisions** or results to **specific stakes** (Beckley, Parkins et al. 2005, Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee 2000).

The public → diverse interest for the use of a limited resource

Public participation



Tools

Negotiation, partnership



Share of power

Focus group

Advisory Committee

Task force

Public hearing



Consideration

Comment sheet

Consultations of documents



Information

Interaction



(Mitchell and Parkins 2005)

(Arnstein, 1969)

Public participation



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Research problem

Provincial government has committed to review formal public participation process.

Little understanding of the factors that facilitate or hinder participation of stakeholders, especially for groups without a financial stake in forest management.

We know that provincial ENGO's are active in public participation processes, but some other stakeholder groups are absent even though they have a vested interest in management of public forest.



Social economy organizations

Forestry cooperatives

Woodlot owners associations

Environmental non-governmental organizations

Are varied but share certain characteristics :

- Social goals are as important as economic ones
- Defend the interests of their members and communities
- Have member-based governance structures



Study goals

Determine the extent of participation by social economy organizations in different public participatory processes in NB,

analysing particularly their **experiences** in specific processes and their **expectations** for future participatory programs.

Methods

Identify Public Participatory Processes

Database using secondary data,
internet searches, and contacts with agencies.

Description of the processes with different attributes

Document Experiences & Expectations of SE organizations

- Provide service or good related to public forest management
- Social mandate related to forest management

13 organizations surveyed :
7 regional from Northern NB
6 peak provincials

Postal survey

Semi-directed interviews



Postal survey

- Partially close-ended questions

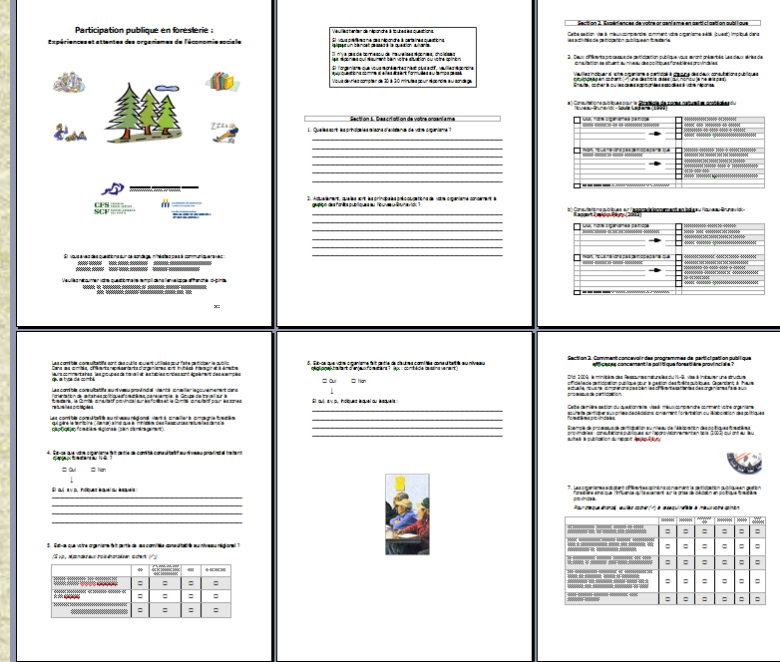
Themes :

Dress a picture of the participation

Evaluate satisfaction with past and ongoing public participation processes

Identify expectations for future public participation programs – provincial forest policies

- Identify questions/themes for detailed interviews



Semi-directed interviews

To deepen the understanding of issues faced by organizations.

- Open questions

Themes :

1. Characteristics of the participation processes

– provincial forest policies

(Obstacles, Picture of good process, Forest stakes to be discuss)

2. Implication of the organizations in the participatory processes and results

(Factor raising problem for participation, decision to participate, results)



Data analysis

Qualitative analysis (words and phrases)

Survey : Descriptive categories
Calculating average score and rank
for questions about preferences

Interview's : Grounded theory
Coding of qualitative data
Grouping into categories
Establishing link between categories

Preliminary results - survey

Regional Organizations

Provincial Organizations

Agree

We are often consulted, but rarely listened (2)

Public participation enable a constructive debate (1)

Our organization prefer to discuss directly with the government rather than participating in participatory processes (2.29)

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Public participation enable a constructive debate (2.57)

Our organization prefer to discuss directly with the government rather than participating in participatory processes (3.4)

Public participation represent a lost of time and energy for our organization (3.14)

Existing public participation opportunities offers the possibilities to influence final decisions taken by the DRN (3.4)

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Disagree

Preliminary results - survey

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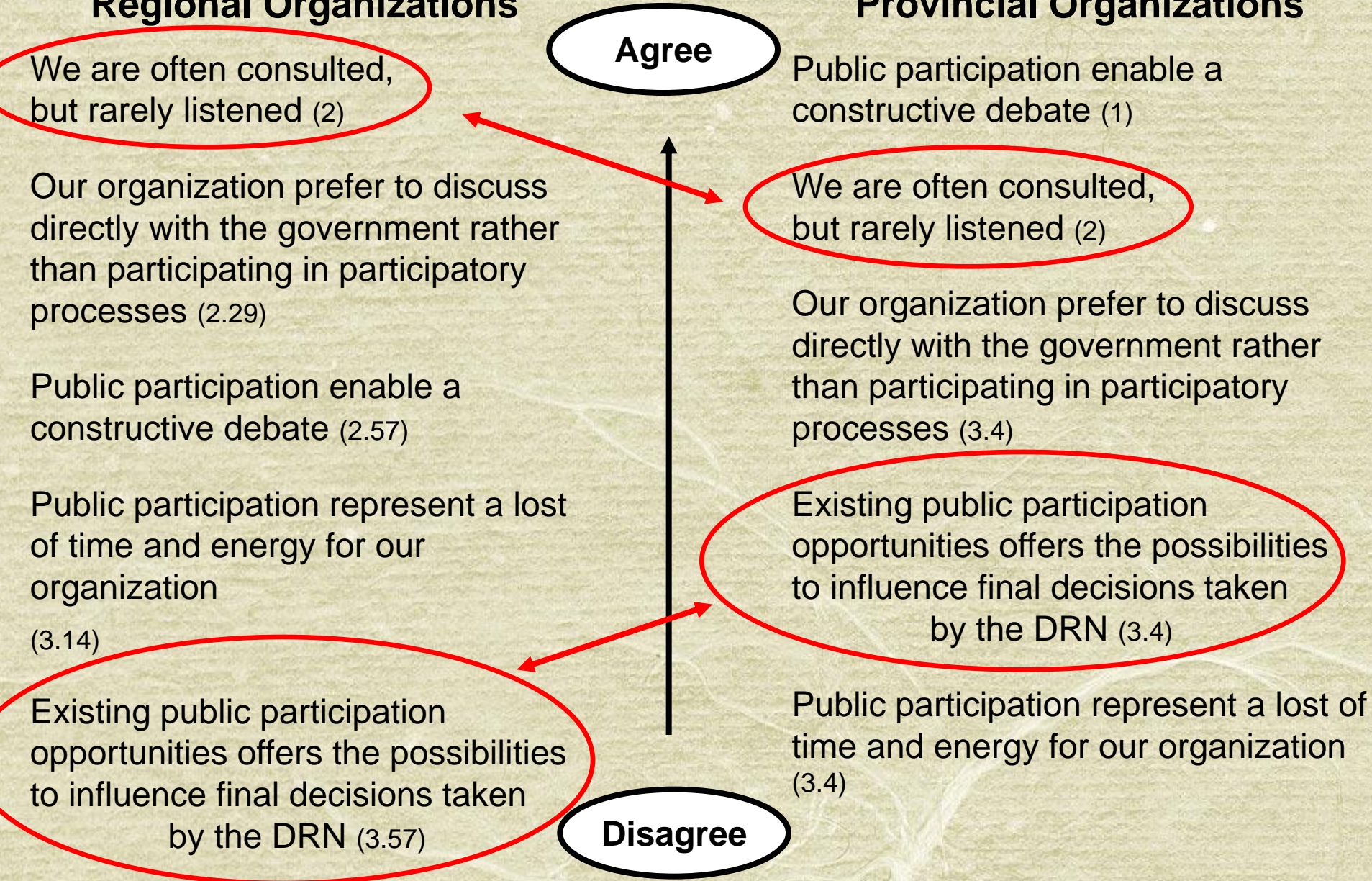
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Agree

Disagree



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Preliminary results – Interview's

Intentions behind public participation process

They say that there's public participation. But there's not. They are afraid of doing some public participation.

Ils disent qu'il y a de la participation publique. Mais il n'y en a pas. Ils ont peur de faire de la participation publique.

It is terribly difficult to change something. And finally when you speak to the civil servants, it's them who are behind and don't want it. That touches somebody or... They have reasons which we do not know.

C'est terriblement difficile de changer quelque chose. Et finalement quand tu parles aux fonctionnaires, c'est eux qui sont derrière et qui ne veulent pas. Ça touche quelqu'un ou... Ils ont des raisons qu'on ne connaît pas.

They don't want to have a lot of people participating.

We make it fast and then we can say that we gave them their chance by consulting them. It's strategic from their part I believe.

Ils ne veulent pas avoir beaucoup de monde qui vont participer. On le fait vite et ensuite on peut dire qu'on leurs a donné une chance en les consultant. C'est stratégique de leur part je crois.

Preliminary results – Interview's

Description of a good public participation process - tools

That depends on whom you put in charge of committees. That's the big thing. One or the other (tools) that's all going to work, if the good persons are implied. And then if you have the willingness. If you want it to work, it's going to work.

Ça dépend de qui tu mets en charge des comités. C'est ça qui est la grosse affaire. Un ou l'autre (des outils) ça va tout marcher, si il y a les bonnes personnes impliquées. Et puis si tu a la bonne volonté. Si tu veux que ça marche, ça va marcher.

I think that if you have (little) workgroup, it's better. Because let's say that you have 50 participants, and you place them around a table, you will arrive absolutely at nothing. But if you divide it, you're going to notice that everyone has the possibility of giving its point of view. I think that's much more productive.

Je pense que si tu as des groupe de travail, c'est mieux. Parce que disons que tu as 50 participants, et que tu les mets tous autour d'une table, tu arriveras absolument à rien. Mais si tu divise ça...tu vas t'apercevoir que chacun a la possibilité de donner son point de vue. Je pense que c'est beaucoup plus productif.

For a punctual consultation, I believe that the organization which makes the consultation should put all the available tools to catch the opinion of the various groups. It can be by Internet, post office, public consultations, face to face interviews. A variety of tools is the best thing.

Pour une consultation ponctuelle, je crois que l'organisme qui fait la consultation devrait mettre tous les outils disponibles pour aller chercher l'opinion des différents groupes. Que ce soit Internet, la poste, des consultations publiques, des entrevues face à face. Une diversité d'outils est la meilleure chose.

Preliminary conclusions

Assessment of situation

Existing opportunity to participate are insufficient and inadequate for Social Economy organizations

Path for improvement

Clarify the purpose of the participatory processes

Move responsibility for public participation processes from the forest industry to another authority

Technical support for organizations before and during the processes

Diversify the types of participation processes

Decentralization of the decision-making