



Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei

**Integrated Coastal Zone  
Management in the Venice Area  
Potentials of the Integrated  
Participatory Management  
Approach**

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## SUMMARY

There is now a large consensus about the importance of actively involving stakeholders and local people for achieving a sound management of coastal zones. However, the nature and extent of public input is generally left to the discretion of local authorities and is often limited. In the Venice Lagoon in particular, the analysis of the local situation made clear some substantial *lacks in co-ordination* among the various administrative bodies in charge of planning and management at various scale and in different sectors. The paper aims to explore the concepts of participatory management and the tools, techniques and phases to implement it. In particular participation and collaboration issues are analysed with reference to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) context. The paper also examines specific requirements and constraints for the complex case of the Venice Lagoon System where participatory management should be initiated with limited demonstrative cases.

**JEL:** D70, O21, Q20

## **NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

In this paper the Participatory Management refers to the process through which the public and stakeholders are informed, contribute to and assume responsibility for management initiatives. Within the Integrated Management of Coastal Zone (ICZM) context, participatory management is considered as one of the fundamentals which imply the involvement and the collaboration of all coastal actors through their participation and cooperation. The paper aims to review the specific stages, mechanisms and techniques to appropriately incorporate public concerns and input into decisions surrounding coastal issues.

The first section of the paper defines the basic concepts involved in the participatory management. The second section reviews the main elements of public participation in ICZM in term of specific stages of the project. They include the scooping, the stakeholder identification, the definition of the degree of participation and the project assessment and revision. The third section reviews the participatory tools to reach the stakeholders groups according to the level of participation desired.

The Venice Lagoon System (VLS) is a complex territorial context in which public participation has often been neglected by administrative bodies in the planning of coastal project and public works. The conclusive remarks identify the main obstacles to be further addressed in the VLS and some specific requirement at the local scale.

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## 1. Introduction

The Venetian Lagoon System (VLS) is recognised as an extremely complex territorial context in which cultural, social and environmental features of international relevance coexist (e.g Unesco, 1995, Musu, I. 2001). Within the debate on the Venice's future the use of an integrated vision and of a cross-sectoral participative approach for the resolution of coastal issues and day-to day citizen problems have become recurrent questions. However, such issues have been generally improperly addressed and limited to the emphasis on major problems, institutional constraints, and solutions without the definition of appropriate tools and arrangements for their implementation.

The examination of theory and applications of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management described in Brochier and Giupponi (2001) allowed the identification of the potentials of such methodology to support new planning and management strategies towards sustainable development of the VLS. The analysis of the local situation made clear substantial *lacks in co-ordination* among the various administrative bodies in charge of planning and management at various scale and in different sectors. They include in particular the state and municipal administrations, or agency in charge of local planning and those dealing with public works. Moreover, general planning approach and management procedures dealing with VLS issues did not include *participatory process* or assessment of *public opinion*. Finally, a main criticism of the public works project was that single issues were analysed individually, rather than following a more *integrated approach* in which issues are assessed within their broader context.

The present paper deals in particular with::

- ❑ the identification of the best solution for implementing an effective *participatory approach in decision making*, in the first section;
- ❑ the identification of the most suitable approaches to overcome the usual problems in *co-ordinating administrations and competencies* in the second section of the paper.

In the concluding remarks, some specific requirements for the VLS are identified

## 2. Participatory management and Decision Making: definitions and concepts

*Participatory Management* can be defined as “*the process through which the public and stakeholders are informed, contribute to and assume responsibility for management initiatives*” (Olsen *et al.*, 1999). This implies that “*the identification, collection and collation of relevant data are shared responsibilities across the sectors*” (EC, 1999). As is suggested in the EU Demonstration Programme on Integrated Management in Coastal Zones (EC, 1999), participatory management requires collaboration of two types:

1. **Participation:** The involvement and collaboration of the private sector, NGOs, citizens groups and other non-institutional organisations or individuals interested in or affected by the management of the coast. Structures to achieve participation may include steering groups of key stakeholders, general forums that meet regularly, technical panels, newsletters and various topic or issue groups as required.
2. **Co-operation:** The involvement and collaboration of the administration partners at different levels of government and in different sectoral branches of the administrations. One of the

objectives of cooperation is coordination of policy. Mechanisms to achieve cooperation may include consultation and joint working groups

In order to maximise its success, participation and cooperation must be considered as integral parts of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) process, however the degree of collaboration depends on the nature of the project and the community in question.

### **3. Participation**

#### **3.1. Importance of public participation in ICZM Processes**

There is now a large consensus that participatory approach and public support is essential for achieving a sound management of the coastal zone. Public participation must be considered as a fundamental part of any ICZM approach, in the absence of which a process cannot be complete. This is due to a number of reasons. For example, if citizens are involved in a process, they will develop a sense of ownership of the project, which is essential if momentum and enthusiasm are to be maintained. Furthermore participation ensures that issues such as quality of life and leisure time pursuits, which may otherwise be overlooked, are clearly addressed in a project. Not only is this important in its own right, but, even more importantly, may also potentially reduce costs and delays resulting from conflict if these issues are not addressed from the outset. Public input into a project is also valuable such that local knowledge and skills may be built upon, and the project developed in line with local needs. Furthermore it is becoming a statutory requirement: the Aarhus convention (UNECE, DETR, 2000), came into force at the end of the year 2000, is particularly relevant. According to this, all member states of the EU will be required to “ensure access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters” (EC, 1999).

Public participation is often seen as an ‘add-on’ to a project. However it is important to avoid this line of thinking and to view participation as an integral part of all ICZM processes which should occur at all stages, from the outset to the very end (figure 1).

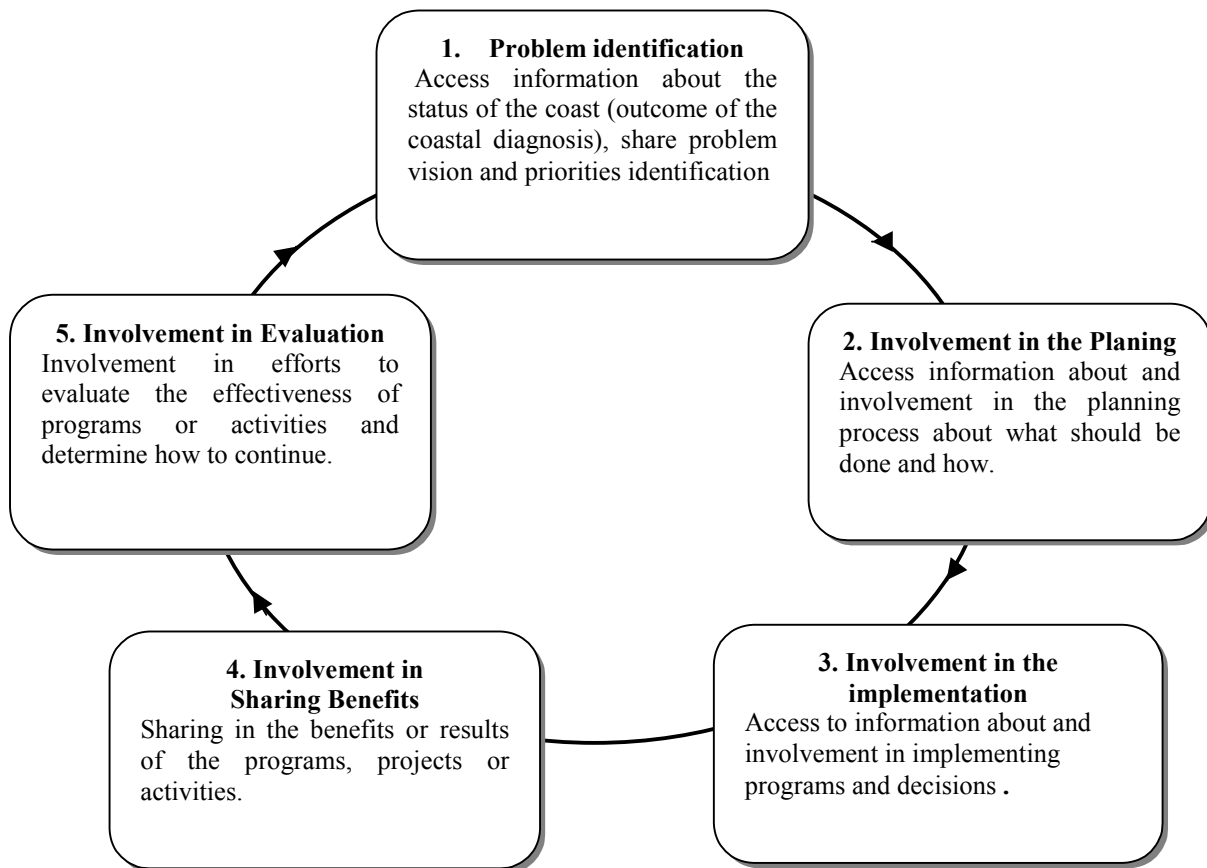
The prerequisite for the establishment of a public participation is to raise awareness of the necessity, the value (economic and social) and the benefits of adopting a more sustainable approach to coastal planning and development.

#### **3.2. Elements of Public Participation in ICZM**

In order to initiate a public participation in an ICZM process, there are a number of elements that should be considered, such as who the stakeholders are and what degree of participation is desirable and realistic. These elements can be considered in terms of specific ‘stages’ of the project, which should occur as part of an ICZM process from its outset, and are:

- Scoping of the project
- Identifying the stakeholders and setting up the communication web
- Defining the degree of participation
- Defining the wider process
- Creating the participation strategy
- Choosing the right mechanisms/ techniques
- Publicising the project
- Project Assessment and Revision.

These steps are discussed below in general terms, largely following those outlined in the EU Demonstration Project on ICZM (EC, 1999). In Section 3.3 some specific methodologies for realising these steps are described.



**Figure 1:** Participatory process in the ICZM cycle

### ***Scoping of the Project***

The project is defined in a general sense by means of meetings between key project proponents in order to develop an idea of relevant stakeholders in addition to general budget and timing issues.

### ***Identifying the stakeholders and setting up the communication web***

To gain trust in the process, it is essential that stakeholders are involved in the project from the outset. In order to do this, the process must be transparent and open, good (two-way) communication networks must be established, real commitment must be shown and a common language that avoids technical jargon must be established. These issues are addressed in this stage, and a core group should be established such that all stakeholder interests are represented at the earliest stage possible. This group will then be of central importance in all subsequent steps. A stakeholder analysis requires an in-depth understanding of the decision making context, which implies answering a list of questions such “Who decides?”, “Who pays?”, “Who performs?”. Thus it allows the identification of all organisations and individuals who have management responsibilities, or the power to influence the decision making process, could have a role in the implementation of decisions, or will be affected by the resulting management activities in the coastal zone. A wide list of categories is envisaged for stakeholders in coastal areas; first of all governmental and local administrations and agencies, but also NGO’s, academic institutions, citizens and their associations.

### ***Defining the degree of participation***

The degree and type of participation should be decided at this stage. Two major forms of participation have been identified (Cicin-Sain and Knecht, 1998):

- ❑ **Advice Giving:** that is to say participation as an advice giving to government. That includes, information, meetings, hearing, and solicit suggestions and comments from the public.
- ❑ **Power sharing:** responsibilities for all or some aspects of ICZM programme are delegated to local communities or user groups.

Experiences show that advice giving is the most prevalent form of participation within ICZM programs. However there is a growing interest for the Power Sharing participation, and many experiment, especially in developing countries are developing community based management approaches (Cicin-Sain and Knecht, 1998).

A useful way of choosing type of participation is to fill in a table, such as Table 1 presented below. In this table the desired degree of participation (defined in the columns), ranging from provision of information to empowerment, can be identified for each stage of the project (described in the rows). Such a table is useful in later stages as the selection of specific participatory tools is highly dependent on the level of participation required.

	Advice Giving			Power Sharing	
	Inform	Feedback	Consultations	Joint Plans	Citizen control
Problem Identification					
Planning					
Implementation					
Monitoring and Evaluation					

**Table 1:** Participation and the Project Cycle (UNDP, 2000)

### ***Defining the wider process***

The basic steps of the project should be defined, for example in terms of ‘work programmes’ or ‘packages’. These should outline the primary objectives of each stage of the project.

### ***Creating the participation strategy***

The work programmes or packages should be clearly defined in terms of timing, budget and agreed rules on working methods, etc. Although this should follow a structured approach it is important that the programme allows flexibility for unforeseen circumstances or delays. Time can be saved by reaching stakeholders through existing interest groups, but these “*may not accurately articulate the often diverse concerns of their constituents*”(Olsen *et al.*, 1999), and therefore it is necessary to ensure that the interests of unorganised groups and the general public are also represented.

A methodology to disseminate information should be established at this stage because to “*raise awareness and ensure that data are used appropriately in the decision-making process is to ensure that understanding is disseminated adequately and efficiently. Simply distributing information, or the data upon which it is based, is unlikely to ensure the transfer of understanding to those who need to know*” (EC, 1999).

### ***Choosing the right mechanisms/ techniques***

Specific techniques to enhance public participation in the project must be selected<sup>1</sup>. There is no universal ‘best practise’ that can be applied to all projects, instead it is important to select

<sup>1</sup> See the following section for suggestions for techniques to enhance public participation.



techniques appropriate to the specific case study, depending on a number of considerations such as the level of participation required, the number and types of stakeholders and available resources.

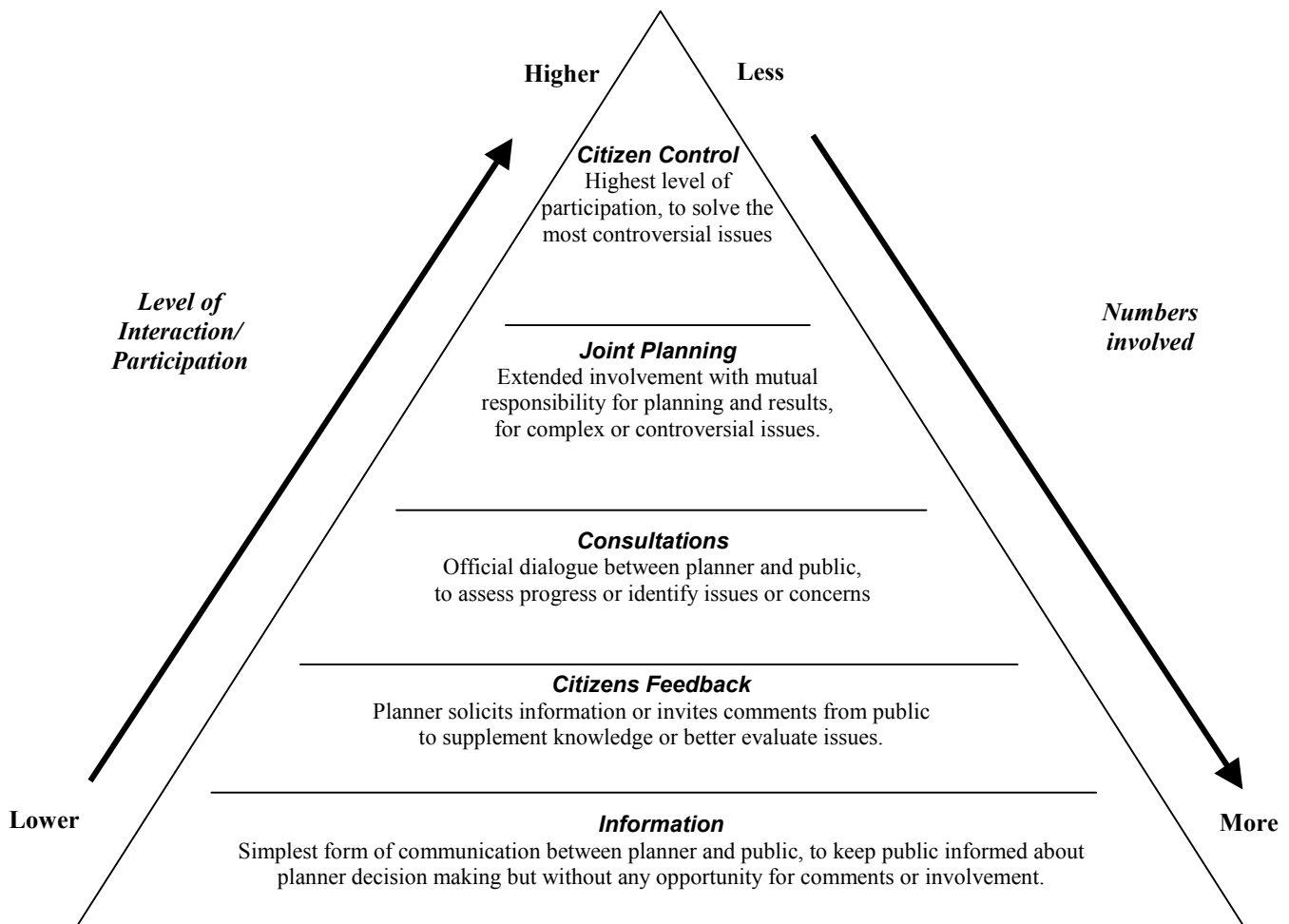


Figure 2: Levels of public participation adapted from (RECCEE, 1996)

### ***Publicising the project***

The general public should be made aware of the project, its aims, importance and how they can become involved. This can be done in a number of ways, such as newsletters, multimedia tools, information displays or public meetings.

### ***Project Assessment and Revision***

As the project proceeds, participation should be assessed and strategies revised if necessary. Assessment is important for a number of reasons (EC, 1999):

- To demonstrate whether resources –time and money- have been used effectively;
- To identify strengths and weaknesses;
- As a basis for future planning;
- To check progress and reassess direction;
- To check whether the actions undertaken (planning or projects) are still what local people want and need;
- To check that the work is benefiting the people who most need it;
- To involve users and participants more closely in project development.

### 3.3. Participatory Tools in ICZM

As has been mentioned, there is no universal ‘best practice’ or prescriptive methodology that can be recommended for all projects. Instead, a combination of techniques is advisable as no single technique is adequate to reach all stakeholder groups, and this should be chosen according to the level of participation desired and the relevant stakeholders.

Most importantly, the degree of participation must be defined because the approaches adopted will be dependent on the degree of participation chosen. Table 2 illustrates this point and lists a number of tools which could be used for various levels of participation, ranging from the minimum legal requirement to stakeholder empowerment. This table can be used in conjunction with Table 1 in which the degree of participation for each stage of the project was identified.

Minimum Legal	Information	Citizen Feedback	Consultation	Joint planning	Citizen Control/ Empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public notification</li> <li>▪ Statutory procedures</li> <li>▪ Right to information</li> <li>▪ Access to committees</li> <li>▪ Written observations</li> <li>▪ Representation at hearings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Newsletters</li> <li>▪ Exhibitions</li> <li>▪ Public displays</li> <li>▪ Media</li> <li>▪ Summary reports</li> <li>▪ Videos</li> <li>▪ Geographical Information System (GIS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information centres</li> <li>▪ Questionnaires</li> <li>▪ Audits of interest</li> <li>▪ Pools/ surveys</li> <li>▪ Public meetings</li> <li>▪ Workshops/ focus groups</li> <li>▪ Conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Networking</li> <li>▪ Planning for real</li> <li>▪ Topic groups</li> <li>▪ Community mapping</li> <li>▪ Multi-attribute analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consensus building</li> <li>▪ Partnerships</li> <li>▪ Round tables</li> <li>▪ Citizen juries</li> <li>▪ Future search</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conflict resolution</li> <li>▪ Neutral facilitation</li> <li>▪ Alternative dispute resolution (ADR)</li> <li>▪ Delegation</li> <li>▪ Local initiatives</li> <li>▪ Capacity building</li> <li>▪ Local referendum</li> </ul>

**Table 2:** Techniques- mechanisms by participation mode (adapted from EC, 1999)

In spite of these difficulties, this section describes some techniques which are thought to be potentially useful, which must then be further assessed and finalised at a later stage.

#### Information Dissemination

In terms of dissemination of information, generating interest and informing stakeholders on how to become involved in the process, a basic structure should be developed. Newsletters, in conjunction with a web-site, are particularly useful for this purpose if well-written, attention-grabbing and well-distributed. Public displays may also be useful if presented in a user-friendly manner and in a well-attended location. These are particularly valuable if staff are present to initiate discussions and answer questions.

#### General Approach to Participation:

##### **Participatory Rural Appraisal**

Before discussing specific methodologies for participation, it is useful to define a general approach, or philosophy, underlying the participation process. One such approach which is thought to be useful is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The name itself is slightly misleading as PRA is in fact a broad term describing a general approach to participation which can take place at all parts of a project cycle (not only appraisal), and is not limited to rural environments. PRA has been described as “*a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, act (...) monitor and evaluate*” (IDS, 2000). Basic principles of PRA are **participation** and **teamwork** (World Bank, 2000). The first allows local people’s input into PRA activities as an essential tool of the research and planning method and as a means for diffusing the participatory approach to development. The second is crucial to the extent that the validity of PRA data relies on informal interaction and brainstorming among those

involved. This is best done by a team that includes local people with perspective and knowledge of the area's conditions, traditions, and social structure and either nationals or expatriates with a complementary mix of disciplinary backgrounds and experience. A well-balanced team will represent the diversity of socio-economic, cultural, gender, and generational perspectives.

Other criteria adopted by the PRA approach are:

- ❑ **Flexibility:** PRA does not provide blueprints for its practitioners. The combination of techniques that is appropriate in a particular development context will be determined by such variables as the size and skill mix of the PRA team, the time and resources available, and the topic and location of the work
- ❑ **Optimal ignorance:** To be efficient in terms of both time and money, PRA work intends to gather just enough information to make the necessary recommendations and decisions
- ❑ **Triangulation:** PRA works with qualitative data. To ensure that information is valid and reliable, PRA teams follow the rule of thumb that at least three sources must be consulted or techniques must be used to investigate the same topics.

Within this general framework, the specific methodologies employed are virtually limitless, although there is a strong focus on using visual techniques, such as community mapping. It is felt that it is useful to follow PRA principles for this case study in order to maximise the participation, collaboration and mutual learning processes.

### ***Planning for Real<sup>®</sup>***

Planning for real<sup>®</sup> is “an eye-catching, ‘hands-on’ method which people use to sort out what needs to be done to improve their neighbourhood” (Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, 2000). The tool was first used in Scotland in 1977 as an alternative to public meetings, as these were commonly unproductive. The tool has since been used in over 100 locations all over the world. Planning for Real<sup>®</sup> basically involves building a 3D model of the community by residents, and option cards are provided which can be arranged and re-arranged so that people may explore and discuss new possibilities and ways of changing the community. It provides a practical way of thinking about a community in an anonymous manner, such that a person may place an option card and may still change his mind as often as he likes, unlike in a public meeting where once an opinion is voiced it is very difficult for an individual to go back on it. Planning for Real is useful as a practical tool to empower communities and include groups commonly excluded, spanning across all ages and social groups. Residents frequently feel it is more useful than a meeting in which ‘experts’ tend to dominate, and language differences between stakeholder groups create problems. Instead, partnerships are built and residents take the lead in decisions concerning their community.

This technique could be useful due to its strength in overcoming language barriers and as a practical tool allowing those without the confidence or experience in more formal settings to become actively involved. Furthermore it is a useful way of exploring future scenarios in such a way that changes in the community can actually be visualised. Planning for Real<sup>®</sup> does take considerable time and skills to organise, however the benefits are likely to be well worth the effort.

### ***Community Mapping***

This is a useful way of bringing together local people and initiating partnerships, collaboration and creativity in the community. The underlying idea is to develop a community map, showing interesting environmental, historic and cultural features. Although this is not directly relevant in ascertaining opinion and involvement in the ICZM project, it is a relatively cheap methodology to apply and could be useful in establishing an important foundation for collaboration in ICZM. As in Planning for Real<sup>®</sup>, this technique is particularly suitable as it overcomes language barriers and formal settings and is focused on a visual, practical tool.

### ***Ranking Exercises***

Ranking exercises can be a fun way of bringing stakeholders together and ascertaining their priorities and preferences on a given issue. To do this a list of options is usually provided, either in pairs with which stakeholders are asked to state their preference, as sorting cards which stakeholders are asked to order or as a list based on which stakeholders are asked to rate each option, for example on a scale of 1-10<sup>7</sup>. The results are then discussed in order to understand why people chose particular options.

### ***European Awareness Scenario Workshop***

The European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW) is an innovative approach to a traditional workshop. Workshops are a method commonly used to involve stakeholders in local development and planning issues. They provide an ideal setting for bringing together various groups of society and exchanging ideas and concerns, or to create a common vision for the future of the community.

This particular structure, organised by the European Commission's *Innovation and SMEs Programme*, in the FLEXIMODO consortium, aims to bring 4 groups of society together (policy-makers, business people, residents and technologists) together in order to increase awareness on how an individual may influence the future of his/her local environment (Fleximodo, 2000). A further aim is to create a common vision for the community and to generate ideas on how and by whom this vision may be realised.

The workshop must be well-organised, in a suitable venue, and representatives of the 4 above-mentioned groups must be present. A potential difficulty is that even in the presence of an experienced facilitator, there are cases in which consensus might not be reached, which may hinder the remaining sessions of the workshop. This problem can be minimised to a certain extent by selecting participants who are believed to be open-minded. It has been mentioned that traditional workshops are likely to exclude some stakeholder groups, however it is believed that this specific structure, if well-organised and well-represented could be used as a means of reaching consensus on certain issues. It is focused on specific scenarios rather than just theories, providing a more 'real' tool on which to focus the meeting.

## **4. Cooperation**

### ***4.1. Importance of cooperation in ICZM***

Cooperation is the second type of collaboration that should be considered integral to all ICZM processes in order to maximise their chance of success. Participation refers to the involvement of relevant stakeholders, whereas cooperation entails collaboration between various levels and sectors of decision-makers and administrators. As has been mentioned, there may be many conflicting interests related to a coastal zone, and cooperation is therefore important such that policies may be harmonised, and administrators can work towards common goals. For effective coastal management, coordination is required between:

- different levels of government which have jurisdiction over a given area;
- agencies responsible for sectoral, territorial and strategic planning;
- neighbouring « upstream and down stream » areas;
- coastal and inland areas;
- different coastal areas including those separated by water.

### ***4.2. Levels of cooperation***

Co-operation operates at a number of degrees, leading from a fragmented approach to integration.

- a) **Fragmented approach:** a situation characterised by the presence of independent units with little communication between them;
- b) **Communication:** there is a forum for periodic communication or meeting among the independent units;

- c) **Coordination:** independent units take some action to synchronise their work;
- d) **Harmonisation:** independent units take action to synchronise their work, guided by a set of explicit policy goals and directions, generally set at a higher level;
- e) **Integration:** there are more formal mechanisms to synchronise the work of various units, which lose at least part of their independence as they must respond to explicit policy goals and directions (this often involves institutional reorganisation).

The degree of cooperation for a given project is largely dependent on established partnerships. It would be unrealistic to expect a high degree of cooperation if previously there was none, instead it is important to increase the degree of collaboration in incremental steps. In fact coordination is generally sufficient as a goal, whereas striving towards integration may be an impractical and unnecessary task.

### ***4.3. Barriers to cooperation***

It is important to understand the barriers which frequently hinder cooperation if these are to be overcome. These can be summarised as follows (EC, 1999b):

- ❑ Fragmentation of institutional arrangements, including gaps and overlaps in responsibilities within and between administrative levels;
- ❑ Lack of awareness of the socio-economic and environmental benefits of effective coastal management;
- ❑ Perceived conflicts between short-term socio-economic needs and longer-term sustainability issues;
- ❑ Lack of implementation and enforcement of key aspects of planning and environmental legislation;
- ❑ Competition amongst sectoral agencies or amongst neighbouring local authorities, sometimes exacerbated by political rivalry.

### ***4.4. Cooperation structures***

The fundamental principles of cooperation are similar to those of participation: all relevant bodies at the local, national and international levels must be identified and involved from the outset of the project, ranging from those with a direct influence in coastal management to more indirect bodies such as those dealing with pollution in the catchment area. The next step is to decide on the cooperation structure to be adopted. Four specific structures have been identified (EC, 1999b):

1. **Working within the statutory planning system:** A project is more likely to be implemented if it is carried out within the existing planning system. However a drawback of this structure is that the scope of the project is generally limited since the existing planning system is likely to be limiting.
2. **Sector or issue based approaches:** This structure is particularly useful if resources are limited because efforts may be concentrated on a particular topic. In this way experience may be gained, trust built and partnerships created which could provide a basis for more integrated projects at a later date.
3. **Coalitions of neighbouring authorities:** Establishing cooperation between neighbouring authorities is essential, however this alone is rather limited in scope unless a mechanism for vertical coordination is also established.
4. **Partnerships:** Partnerships are the most effective way considering all four dimensions of coordination (vertical, horizontal, territorial and temporal integration) simultaneously. Special

care must be taken to represent stakeholders not located in the project area, otherwise vertical integration in particular may not be effective.

Partnerships may take several forms, for example public and private interests may be combined within the same group or in separate groups. If the group becomes large, it may be sub-divided into several thematic working groups, led by a steering committee, provided it is ensured that each of these groups is sufficiently representative. In terms of vertical integration it is often useful to establish a more formal structure, in particular in the absence of a national context for ICZM (as is this case in Italy). For example formal agreements with relevant national ministries could be made.

#### ***4.5. Cooperation Methodology***

In terms of partners, it is useful to begin with a small, neutral group which ‘spirals’ throughout the project in terms of increasing vertical integration throughout time. In order to do this, trust in the project and increased recognition of its importance must be established such that other bodies are compelled to take part in the initiative and do not feel that the project is threatening their ‘territory’. A balance between top-down and bottom-up strategies such that national and local interests are considered is necessary.

It should be remembered that the process is dependent on voluntary cooperation of other parties, therefore the input required must be made clear as must the fact that cooperation, rather than competition is the ultimate goal. It is therefore important that the lead agency is neutral and does not attempt to take over the role of any existing bodies. Visioning exercises are a useful way of clarifying these goals to other partners.

As the project progresses, cooperation strategies within the general framework may need to be revised. The project should aim to incrementally increase cooperation as trust and partnerships are built up until the desired level is achieved.

### ***5. Concluding remarks***

The importance of public participation relies on the use of knowledge, skills and enthusiasm of the public to support decisions and on the recognition of its significant role.

Participatory participation implies the stakeholders involvement by means of improved co-ordination and partnership at all levels. An important prerequisite is the clear identification and involvement of stakeholders from the process outset. Once a core group has been established, methods to reach the wider public can be identified and the degree of participation for each stage of the project cycle defined.

The paper examined conventional public participation tools that could be used for the ICZM. No particular tool is required. However public opinion and enthusiasm are largely influenced by the participation process as a whole, and not solely by a single tool (Sors, J.C 2001). Most tools should be used in combination with others. In this way public participation should be think in an holistic manner. Public participation strategy should be include in a wider approach integrating economic, social and institutional characteristics.

Just as for participation, the first step of cooperation is to identify relevant partners and ensure that these are included in the project from the outset. Once the desired level of cooperation has been defined, a structure should be developed. This must be well defined, but must remain flexible as the process is assessed and may need to be revised.

Due to the peculiarities of social, decisional and ecological issues in the Venice area, public participation is a fundamental element to pursue policy paths toward sustainable development for the VLS. In particular residents have a high level of awareness of local issues that could be used with benefits. However, socio-political Venetian context do not favour the development of participatory management. In particular there is a lack of tradition of public participation in the city. Past experience despite some progresses in encouraging public involvement (cf. Sors, J.C 2001) did not have particular success. Other factors contributing to this, are the endless debate on Venice future and the complex decisional and institutional context. Consequently, due to the high number of actors involved, the identification of appropriate approaches for managing participation and cooperation in the Venice area is a complex task *per se*.

An accurate stakeholder analysis is firstly required for the identification of the best participatory approach. This task due to the international relevance of the area, at least in theory, should imply the identification of stakeholders also within the millions of tourists (distinguished in various categories) visiting the area every year. It is also important to assess the local situation so as to identify groups that might be more difficult to reach (Sors, J.C 2001).

Achieving cooperation among administrations playing roles in planning and management issues in the Venice Lagoon System (VLS) is also a complicated task, first of all for the intrinsic complexity of the institutional and decisional framework dealing with that area.

Main barriers which can hinder cooperation and that should be considered in further research on participatory planning in the VLS include:

- The rigidity of the bureaucratic system;
- The mentality changes that real co-operation implies taking ride of main conflict of interests;
- The fragmentation of institutional arrangements, including gaps and overlaps in responsibilities within and between administrative levels;
- and the lack of implementation and enforcement of key aspects of planning and environmental legislation.

Participation must be organised in conjunction with the main planning process and in particular within the safeguarding operations of the Venice area. Participatory management should be introduced to provide consultation, and two-ways flow of information to provide alternatives in resolving day-to-day citizen problems.

In a socio-economic and cultural environment like the VLS, participatory management should necessarily be seen as a long process which should start with limited demonstrative cases.

Benefits from these initiatives could be relevant in particular by:

- Strengthening capacity and institutional framework addressing Venice problems;
- Improving information flows through better communication;
- Starting changing the way institutions think;
- Empowering existing public interest organizations (Vanderwal J. H., 1999);
- Developing public willing to participate;
- Build credibility and gain trust of public and stakeholders in local government.

If successful, participatory management could catalyse processes like raising awareness of the public and integration of various administrations, searching for an accurate balance between top-down and bottom-up strategies in such a way that international, national and local interests are adequately considered.

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