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Participation and learning for climate change adaptation: Experiences from local urban planning and forestry in Sweden

- Research meets decision-making?

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Research Report, Stockholm Environment Institute, 2011



A Framework for Dialogue Between Local Climate
Adaptation Professionals and Policy Makers

Rasmus Klocker Larsen, Åsa Gerger Swartling,
Neil Powell, Louise Simonsson
and Maria Osbeck

Klocker Larsen, R., Gerger Swartling, Å.,
Powell, N., Simonsson, L., Osbeck, M.
2011. *A Framework for Dialogue
Between Local Climate Adaptation
Professionals and Policy Makers*. SEI
Research Report.

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Background

- Aim: explore the role of learning in advancing climate change adaptation
- Key research questions:
 - How can participatory processes contribute to learning on climate change and adaptation?
 - What characterizes this learning process and how, if at all, does it contribute to a self-perceived increase in the capacity to adapt to climate change?
- What does it mean for decision making?

Stockholm region case study 2008



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- Stockholm region: 2M people, multiple interests/claims in the same space; advanced infra-technical systems
- Formalized and professionalized process to address adaptation needs
- Climate change → changing weather-related risks

Swedish Forestry case study 2010



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- Forestry: Covering 60% of Sweden, 10-12% of industrial employment, 3-4% of total GDP.
- Ownership shared among 350 000 individual owners (50%), private companies (25%), national state (25%)
- Climate change → increased growth, but increased risk for pathogen and pest damage



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Research approach: forestry

- Participatory research: focus groups with 24 participants * 3 meetings, observations, stakeholder workshops and follow-up interviews
- Scientific input in focus groups (climate and impact scenarios presented by experts)
- Data: meeting notes, transcripts, questionnaire responses, stakeholder produced material

Reserach approach cont'd



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Stakeholders: Private forest owners and Forest professionals
(area inspectors, forest agency advisers, buyers, companies)

Themes in focus groups

- Exploration of risk perceptions and exposure
- Interactions with experts; climate change scenarios, land use and hydrology impacts; implications for forests
- Expectations of future adaptation needs

Final stakeholder workshop

- All groups combined to share experiences and perspectives on climate adaptation efforts



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Results (across the board)

- Participatory process → change in (expressed) perceptions and learning about climate change effects, vulnerability and potential adaptation measures
- Opportunity to engage in process widely appreciated by participants → space for sharing knowledge and views on challenges and opportunities
- Gap between participatory exercises and everyday decision-making
- Scaling up a key challenge: how to foster and facilitate learning in existing decision making?

Insights



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Case studies offer an opportunity to invite practitioners and their experiences to serve as 'cases' in policy making, thus bringing to the surface the practical experiences and capacities of stakeholders.

Case study learning here achieves new significance if viewed as a platform to leverage stakeholder competencies and capacities to driving a reconstitution of existing institutions.



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Insights cont'd

In such research projects the selection of research methods has more than academic interest: they significantly shape how the work mediates between local efforts and higher order political goals.

Methodological choices in case study research determine whether the case study supports planned policy (coercion and regulation) or non-coercive policy (facilitated self-organised adaptation).



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Insights cont'd

Critical to balance benefits from the case study work between different stakeholders (e.g. various community members), non-case recipients of the work (e.g. policy makers) and the researchers themselves.



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Decision making-implications

- Learning already a key aspect of established processes (cf. spatial planning)
- Providing information not enough; need to establish learning arenas when missing
- Experts as people matter as much as the results they bring.
- Need to reflect upon and be honest about for whose benefit participatory processes are run



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Thank you!

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