

Dialogue support to change attitude towards sea defence in an urban re-development, the Somme bay - FR

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Preventing and managing natural hazards and technological (human-made) hazards
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The manner, and more especially the use of media tools, which was employed has allowed a progressive change in the perception and comprehension of users in regard to sea-defence. This has opened the way to legitimise some choices of decision that consider strategic retreat and give a new boost to the economic activity of a small sea-side town.

4. Overview of the case

The approach used by the Syndicat Mixte d'Aménagement de la Côte Picarde (SMACOPI) in a small area of its territory was to progressively change traditional practices. This led, together with all the involved stakeholders to a more thorough dialogue as regards the future economic and tourist development of the town and especially to the means that have to be devoted to sea-defence.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

In the context of the Somme Bay, the economy is mainly based on the landscape quality. However, the sedimentary processes are particularly worrying as the bay is silting up and there is erosion of the shingle spit. The town district of Ault is located where the chalk cliff meets the low wet land (Bas-champs). Although the original town of Ault was a fisherman's village, the current, main economic activity is the sea-side tourism. The story of Ault is simultaneously linked with marine erosion which is impressive here. The inexorable retreat of the chalk cliff threatens several houses and the shingle spit, which protects the low land behind, and needs a constant maintenance.

From 1981, after a catastrophic landslide (ten houses were destroyed), heavy protective works were done by the local authority. The high cost of these works in regard to the small size of the town has dried up the investment capacity of Ault with two consequences: the maintenance of these works has been neglected and the economic development of the town has been seriously limited. The lack of available financial means, as well as new degradation of the protective works at the end of the 1990's, led the stakeholders, peculiarly the SMACOPI, leader of the coastal management policy in this area, to reconsider the sea-defence strategy.

b) Objectives

The objectives pursued were to progressively change the local ruling way through an exchange of knowledge (e.g. production of a database) to justify the choice of decisions which might strongly modify the traditional past policy in regard to sea protection and urban re-development i.e. the creation of a new urban area aside from the erosion threat.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

The initiative was managed and run by the SMACOPi, the main leader for the Picard coastal management policy. This syndicate (atypical in France) began in 1974. Its current missions and working ways have resulted as much from its origins (started by State will) as from its subsequent development. Therefore, presently it develops investment programmes, takes on the financial control of the works and manages facilities for tourism and recreation activities, in the context of the sustainable development of the Somme Bay. It employs nearly 300 persons. As well as the SMACOPi, there is a strong mobilisation of all the partners and State services who have collectively been involved through the district sub-prefect. However, regional scientists (e.g. the University of Amiens) were not much involved and did not really succeed in integrating into the work.

b) ICZM Tools

Although based on a syndicate council of around twenty delegates, the traditional working way of the SMACOPi has tended to poorly involve local stakeholders and authorities. From the example of English approaches (e.g. the Dorset forum), the syndicate this time chose a more participative way which favours dialogue with stakeholders. With shoreline management as a overall theme and the "Bas-Champs" and Ault cliff as the selected geographic area, there were two points which have been historically considered by the SMACOPi.

The initiative, combining information (knowledge sharing) and dialogue, was based on 4 types of tool:

- production of a data base;
- publication of a quarterly newsletter;
- organisation of public debates;
- creation of a web site to develop a stakeholders network

Moreover to support the approach and make it reproducible for other themes, an external audit (independent from SMACOPi) and the meeting of an evaluation group were conducted after each public debate.

7. Cost and resources

The SMACOPi received a grant of €60 000 from the DIACT to organise this dialogue approach. It has mainly used internal means and the work was led by two trainees (ICZM co-ordinators). Otherwise, important diverse, unspecified financial resources were used for the urban study and landownership control to realise the expected urban development (e.g. the purchase by the SMACOPi of the Moulinet estate in 2003).

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

The work has focused on public debates about the re-development of Ault. Four forums occurred in 2005/2006 with a good participation (around 60 persons each time). All these meetings were filmed as well as 6 additional interviews of association delegates. So the partners were able to better express their ideas and questions as regards to the proposed project. Moreover, the video has allowed a better appreciation of the positions of the stakeholders so that the SMACOPi was able to give more precise information in answer. However, the other tools which had been expected, were not created (e.g. data base, external audit).

9. Success and Fail factors

The public debates gave satisfaction to the different participants who were concerned by the process because they had the

feeling they had been heard and had contributed to the decisions. Some criticism previously levelled at the SMACOPI concerning lack of transparency and top-down decision-making) has become less as a result. However, the initial ambition that an actual change in the attitude in regard to the sea protection and a consensus about the decisions to take it does not seem to have been reached. However, the different stakeholders can now formulate their arguments and be heard.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

In a changing political environment in the area of the Somme Bay, this type of approach has contributed to an evolution of the way that the internal government of the SMACOPI better considers local stakeholders, especially the local authorities.

11. Prepared by

Luce Goudedranche – CETMEF- France


12. Verified by

Yvonne Battiau-Queney – EUCC France

13. Sources

- Application file for the project call for proposal- SMACOPI
- Graduate dissertation - Master Sciences Halieutique et Aquacoles- 2006- La Baie de Somme sud : un territoire de projets expérimentant les principes de la GIZC- Aurélie Conil
- Newsletter and reports of the syndicate council from 2005 to 2008
- Questionnaires and interviews to follow through the call for proposal «Pour un développement équilibré des territoires littoraux par une GIZC» of the DAI/ACT/SGmer - CETMEF/IFREMER- Luce Goudedranche/ Jean-Louis Gaignon
- Trainee report - Master « Évaluation et Expertise des politiques publiques »- 2006 - Penser le littoral. Perspectives pour une étude sur les perceptions sociales des enjeux du littoral picard et de la GIZC- Céline Santerre



Presentation_gizc_Vpapier (3.8 MB) 

Revue de presse (14.47 MB) 