

Abstract

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During recent decades, opinions about how nature should be protected by the public sector have changed. One result is a better awareness of the important role that local actors play in the preservation of valuable areas. The overall aim of the thesis is to increase the understanding of preconditions for bottom-up approaches within nature conservation planning of cultural landscape. The research issues touch upon: (1) the significance of strategies which are based upon the landscape perspective and the capacities of local actors, (2) the capability of participatory processes and (3) the abilities of decision makers to promote a planning system which is better adapted to the local level.

The theoretical framework describes bottom-up approaches on the basis of research concerning participation, democracy, planning, rural development and landscape. It is concluded that local participation is complex within representative democracy, but is advocated in the interactive planning theory which deals with communicative rationality and social learning. It has also an important position in research of local mobilisation where the assumption is that planning processes should be carried out upon the initiative of those concerned.

The research has made use of a diverse methodology. Interactive- and action-oriented research has complemented questionnaires and interviews. The investigations focused primarily on the municipalities of Orust and Munkedal in Western Sweden but other areas were also involved. Both local actors and managers within the public sectors took part.

The results show that bottom-up approaches imply an emphasis upon the specific landscape which humans experience with all their senses and transform through daily actions. It also refers to efforts which are formulated on the basis of insights into the specific community and the context in which landscape values exist. The major driving forces are social capital, entrepreneurship, commitment and the capacity to represent public interests. Participatory processes may contribute to the preservation of aesthetic, heritage, biological and recreation values in the landscape on the bases of local conditions. The study further indicates that it is possible to incorporate bottom-up approaches into the planning system if the normative preconditions exist, i.e. societal support for a larger degree of decentralized work and participatory processes. Comprehensive structural changes, as well as practical efforts, are thus needed to expand social interaction between the authorities and local actors.

Keywords: Nature conservation planning, cultural landscape, local participation, bottom-up approach, landscape perspective, human capacities, decentralisation, implementation.

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