

Participating in Nature: Communities and Protected Areas in Central and Eastern Europe

10th – 11th March 2008

Report of the symposium process

by

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Introduction

The aim of the symposium was to bring together people with experience in conducting participatory processes to conserve nature in Central and Eastern Europe to share experience, “explore the territory”, and identify what needs to be done to ensure that these processes are effective. Existing models of participatory approaches rely either on a strong civil society sector, as in Western Europe, or coherent semi-autonomous communities motivated by resource dependence to respect traditional rules, as in developing countries. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and other post-Soviet/communist nations, have particular challenges that are not addressed by approaches common in either Western Europe or tropical countries, and this symposium aimed to move towards defining new models of participatory conservation appropriate to the conditions and realities of Central and Eastern Europe.

The process consisted of two interrelated strands:

- The formal presentation of a series of case studies
- Periods of discussion/reflection

The case studies presented concrete examples of participation in action by demonstrating the issues encountered, considerations involved, perspectives and experience gained in a variety of different countries and contexts. These presentations were reminding the symposium of the issues encountered but also introducing new dimensions and insights to consider as the meeting progressed.

The discussion process was designed to make the most of these inputs by guiding thought and reflection in a structured way. The first day was one of “deconstruction” in which participants were encouraged to look at their own experience more objectively, compare it with other case studies, thus taking a more analytical approach. This involved identifying the different elements or stages of participation; identifying areas about which more information was needed; and analyzing the process involved with reference to the different types of participation identified in the literature.

The second day involved drawing these elements together by identifying broad themes and areas (e.g. policy, practitioners, stakeholders) requiring more attention; and make a series of recommendations.

Framework for the symposium

The symposium began with plenary presentations followed by an introduction by Anna Lawrence to the definition and objectives of participation. Recognising that there are many ways to define participation, she proposed:

the involvement of non-conventional stakeholders **along with the conventional stakeholders¹**, in planning, implementing and evaluating actions that affect their lives and environment.

Kinds of participation

- **Informative²**: led by existing decision-makers who inform others of their intentions and activities.
- **Consultative**: led by existing decision-makers; others contribute information and opinions. *Top down.*
- **Functional**: existing decision-makers involve others in implementation

¹ The phrase ‘along with the conventional stakeholders’ was added at the request of a participant, to clarify that they are not *excluded* by participation

² The category ‘informative’ would be considered by many *not* to be participatory but was included here because of its relevance in the post-socialist context

- **Collaborative:** a more equal partnership where existing decision-makers share decisions and knowledge equally with others
- **Transformative:** local people are empowered; make and implement decisions; seek advice and support from experts where necessary. *Bottom up.*

The discussion process

This consisted of a series of discussion periods most of which involved some kind of group discussion as part of the activity.

The first day - overview

The first day was therefore aimed at helping individuals get outside their own experience and gain some objectivity, so that (a) more meaningful comparisons could be made with others' experience and (b) it could be seen within a wider context. This involved becoming more aware of the process and decisions involved in undertaking a participatory approach, before moving on to considering what constituted success.

Day 1 – aspects of participation lacking clarity

The aim of this session was to begin with an appreciation of the current state of awareness of the issues involved and to identify areas needing more focus and consideration. In preparing papers for the symposium, participants had been asked to cover the following questions when describing their case studies:

1. Your context. Where are you working, what is special or distinctive about it? Who are the stakeholders involved?
2. Conservation policy in the country of your focus. How does this help or hinder participation?
3. Organization. What are the groups involved in conserving the area you are writing about, and how are they connected to each other? [for example, the park administration may be under the Ministry of Environment; or it may be subcontracted to an NGO or other institution]
4. Participation. What was the objective, whose idea was it, who was involved and why, who was left out and why?
5. How did you involve the different stakeholders in planning the participatory monitoring or conservation?
6. What were the activities carried out?
7. Were they successful? Why or why not? Who decided what was successful, and how did they measure it?

8. Recommendations. What worked, why, and what could have been done better?
What advice would you have for others trying to do something similar?
9. What makes your experience fit your context?

Some of these aspects proved difficult to identify: not all these points were covered in the papers received, and so we started the symposium discussion process by asking the question, “**Which questions were most difficult to answer and why?**” The aim of this session was for the participants to consider each of the questions and compare their experiences. Was it always the same things that were difficult for each project, and where did they differ? This question also presented the opportunity to be able to identify the areas about which more knowledge was required, why it was lacking, and how such knowledge could be obtained. This was discussed in groups before feeding back to a plenary session.

The chief difficulties were found with:

- Defining the **context**, as it was difficult to know where to draw the boundaries of the study: anything or everything could be considered a part of the context. Any conservation activity is most obviously relevant at a local level but is also influenced by the wider context at county, national and international scales. Each of these represents laws, policies, stakeholders that influence and are influenced by the participatory activity. In addition, it is often difficult to be objective about one’s own environment due to over-familiarity.
- The **organisations and stakeholders**, as it was often not clear exactly how they were implicated or related to each other, where allegiances lay. Some aspects may be hard to see due to their hidden nature or due to secrecy, as for example, identifying who was driving the problems and processes, and all such considerations are in a continual state of flux
- Success, as it was not always easy to **define what counted as success**. The definition of success might vary according to stakeholder and context, and considering notions of success raised issues of how to measure it. In addition, it was important to clarify whether one was considering the success of the initiative in terms of conservation achievement, and/or participation. There was also an issue of time-scale as long-term effects had not yet been seen.

Day 1 – factors leading to success

To take this process further and gain further clarity the second discussion session asked the discussion groups to consider “**What are the factors that seem to lead to success?**” which involved considering issues such as what constituted success, for whom, over what time-scale, and when was it evident that an initiative had been successful.

The discussion groups were then asked to relate these to the kind of participation used, by writing factors on post-it notes and attaching them to one of five sheets each representing one of the classes of participation identified in the literature: informative, consultative, functional, collaborative, transformative. These had been described by Dr Anna Lawrence in her key-note presentation that morning, and were displayed on a flip-chart as a reminder. The focus on distinguishing different types of participation was to encourage consideration of what participation means, and what kind of participatory activities work in what kinds of contexts. The aim was to give participants an opportunity to think beyond their own individual experience and identify their underlying assumptions, thus encouraging a fuller appreciation of the spectrum of factors involved, their relationship with context, as well as generate new ideas about potential for additional needs and activities.

The factors noted on individual post-it notes are listed in Annexe I. These were grouped according to theme and type of participation and are shown in the table below according to the type of participation with which they were associated. The point was also made that participation often varied between stakeholders and over the duration of the project so that it could be difficult to categorise in this way.

Factor leading to success	Participation type				
	informational	consultative	functional	collaborative	transformative
General					
Action at different levels: local, national, international (presentations, expertise)	x	x			
Understanding					
Communication: good, clear, efficient	x	x	x	x	x
Objectives: clear	x	x	x	x	x
Support					
Support - legal (new national parks, enabling processes, improved legislation, designations and procedure)	x	x	x	x	
Support - funding	x	x	x	x	x
Support - technical, logistical	x	x	x	x	x
Team					
Motivation			x	x	x
Team - spirit (including willingness of partners to work together, mutual respect for different viewpoints)				x	x

Team - structure (including well defined roles for members, clear inspirational leader with vision)	x	x
Team - processes (including periodic feedback, reflection and evaluation)	x	x
Team supported by consultants who are experienced specialists	x	x

Building relationship and trust

Stakeholders - willingness to participate	x	x	x	x	x
Good rapport	x	x	x	x	x
Time and patience				x	x
Collaboration both internally and with other organizations & sectors for mutual benefit				x	x
Empowerment (including giving women a voice)				x	x
Respect for local knowledge and opinion (including understanding local meanings of nature and allowing expression of opinion)				x	x
Relevant project of obvious benefit to stakeholders				x	x
Local initiative required to continue the project					x
Recognition and acknowledgement of local initiative and opinion by decision-makers					x
Recognition of all related stakeholders					x

Some general trends can be distinguished. It may be that factors mentioned for just a few types of participation (e.g. enabling legislation) are also relevant to all types, but that they are especially important to the few categories mentioned. “Recognition of all related stakeholders” is another such example that is likely to be important for all types of participation but of super-importance for the transformative approach.

Factors very obviously thought important for all types of participation included the following:

- Support for the process: legal, technical, logistical, and enough resources in terms of time, money and personnel.
- Clear communications and objectives
- The willingness of stakeholders to engage (determines whether participatory approaches were possible, and what might be achievable)
- Good rapport

Factors mentioned at the informational/consultative end tended to focus on the need for resources and procedures required for action by the administrative authority, with greater mention of the need to act at several different levels at once that reflects the interface with government. As the method of participation progressed from informational to transformative, there was an increasing focus on the importance of people and relationships: the need for a functional team, more time was required, yet the relationships become warmer. Interestingly, the need for “motivation” appears at the

functional type of participation, indicating the increased energy and required in moving towards the transformational.

The second day – overview

The second day was focused on drawing together the individual elements that had been teased out during the first day's discussion, and moving towards the conclusions and recommendations.

Day 2 – identifying common themes

Participants were asked to identify common themes that they noticed emerging from the case studies and discussions, and report these in plenary. These are listed in full in annex II and summarized below:

- There was a history of sudden top-down protected area designation to control human impact but without community involvement or input into the initial decisions.
- This immediately generated perceived conflict and led to a perceived split between government institutions that administer resources in protected areas, and local people's everyday lives, and to the notion of conflict between the needs of the environment vs. the needs of local people.
- The split was further entrenched by a sudden enforcement of rules that in many cases went against traditional practice (e.g. mushroom collecting), and directly impacted livelihoods.
- Issues surrounding property rights and economic (dis) benefit combined with economic need
- Managing conflict is an important activity.
- Links need to be made between human and environmental needs through a dialogue between stakeholders, with the involvement of communities.
- The community is diverse but there is little attention to different points of view within the community. Different generations, for example, act differently and have different perspectives.
- Rangers have split loyalties being members of the community and yet also part of the protected area administration responsible for enforcement of government imposed policy.
- There are few examples of functional or collaborative participation.
- People's attitudes change after taking part in participatory activities (often clarifies misunderstandings)
- Local people don't always want to participate.

- Participation costs time and money
- Need to “learn-by-doing”

Day 2 – the final session: challenges for this symposium

In the final session, each group was presented with a flip-chart with one of the following questions, or challenges posed by the symposium process:

- Which kinds of participation have been most used and why? Which have not been used and why not?
- What have been the experiences of the people involved?
- What have been the outcomes of the participatory experiences?
- Which factors affect success most?
- What recommendations do we have for participatory conservation in central and eastern Europe/post-socialist countries?

Participants were free to move between groups to encourage a cross-fertilization of ideas and an opportunity to contribute to all questions, although one rapporteur for each group did not move as s/he was responsible for recording the responses and so stayed with the flip-chart, and was able to report back to plenary (see Annexe III for a transcript of the flip-charts).

Which kinds of participation have been most used and why? Which have not been used and why not?

The types of participation that have been most used have been the informative and the consultative. One of the main reasons for this has been that less time is required for these. Approaches further along the ladder of participation require more time and effort as they rely on the building of trust and relationship. In addition there is a tendency to begin with informative and consultative approaches, and as most of the programmes are in their initial stages, there has not been time to move towards the collaborative/transformational types of process.

Another reason was that initiating organisations do not really welcome the loss of control that transformational approaches imply and therefore often do not really wish transformational participation unless public support is essential. The question was raised as to whether the transformational approach may be impossible in some situations (e.g. changing a forestry law) unless a very committed group is able to self-organize well-enough to mobilise strong enough pressure for change. It was further pointed out that people rarely self-organize unless it is crucial for them.

There was a discussion about whether there was an additional category beyond transformational where communities were already in control, but it was difficult to determine where this differed from actual practice.

What have been the experiences of the people involved?

These were discussed in terms of positive and negative experiences. The first positive aspect surrounding participatory processes was that conservation was made relevant by reformulating it in terms that had meaning for stakeholders (e.g. in terms of “animal health” for herders). Facilitators are involved to provide the required knowledge and social skills to ease the ongoing dialogue; ensure information flows freely; ensure the recognition of contributors during the process; and build trust over time. Where successful the participatory process is fun, brings people together socially and celebrates achievements.

Negative experiences that needed caution to avoid occurred where expectations were raised but not met. This led to a loss of trust which was difficult to repair, and which made further participatory activities much more difficult. Further negative experiences occurred where traditional practices were suddenly criminalised; or where groups were excluded from the process, such as the Roma, ethnic or religious groups; or where research fatigue from too many surveys meant that local communities were weary of the time and effort required to respond.

What have been the outcomes of the participatory experiences?

In some places (e.g. Slovakia) it has meant a better and more stable plan that has local acceptance and support. In others (e.g. Romania) the conflicts didn't stop but the communities gained advantages in negotiation. Participation required more time, money and people in the short term but it could save money in the future, as less effort was required in enforcement and conflict management. This could lead to more sustainable management in the long run as the protected area administrators and the local communities worked towards the same goals.

The participatory process improved the soft skills of the protected area managers, enhancing their communication, mediation and educational abilities, and enabling them to learn about others' needs and opinions, as well as to learn from the experiences and mistakes of others. It also resulted in a well informed public and stakeholders, and provided tools for communication, all of which supported a synergy of action.

Which factors affect success most?

The appropriate legislative framework that fits the reality and context of the protected area was thought to be an important factor for success, as was clear property and use rights. Other factors contributing to success were clear objectives and a strategy to achieve them that involved focused and detailed planning to minimize the risks of problems at different project stages. Learning lessons from other projects to identify best practices was of value in designing the process.

The target groups and their needs should be properly identified, but at the same time the project needed to take account of the available resources of time and money. Mapping the

actors involved and their hidden interests was also thought to be important, as this information was needed for the design of the participatory process. If such considerations were not taken into account all efforts would fail resulting in a waste of resources and reduction in confidence.

In designing the process it was thought important for some goals to be readily achievable in the short term to demonstrate some small success to stakeholders, thus reinforcing and encouraging the participatory process.

Effective and transparent communication, within the team, with stakeholders and between stakeholders, was thought to be a vital ingredient for success. Good team dynamics were important: good leadership, facilitation, and appropriate people in the right places, as well as a commitment to capacity building and delegation. The right mix of personalities could make a great deal of difference, something that can be a result of luck.

There needed to be trust between stakeholders with no corruption being a precondition for successful participation. Any conflicts at both local and institutional levels needed to be managed. Decision-makers needed to be willing to acknowledge participatory inputs, and to facilitate involvement and motivate volunteers (e.g. through rewards).

The point was also raised that sometimes participation was not the most appropriate way to achieve certain conservation goals, and there may be a different way to deal with the problem. This is because participation requires high skills and resources and doing it badly could have detrimental effects. An example was given in which a participatory process was used to control a quarry development. The resulting land use plan failed and in hindsight it was realised that a better strategy would have been to buy the land. Another example failed because the people involved in the participatory process were not truly representative of the community. In this case it would have been better to map the actors first and assess whether the communities were really ready to participate.

The discussion raised the issue of success, and the need to distinguish between whether the focus was the success of the participatory process or the success of the conservation activities, as a very successful participatory process would not necessarily mean that the conservation of biodiversity was successful.

What recommendations do we have (including policy and legislation) for participatory conservation in Central and Eastern Europe/post-socialist countries?

There was a need to set minimum standards for aspects of the participatory process that would include:

- procedures
- transparency of communication
- level of involvement of defined groups of potential stakeholders

These would need to be specified for a range of situations as different situations can require different minimum standards. An imminent threat, for example, that would result in the drastic decline in a population of a rare species would require different provisions to a more general management of the status quo.

Time and costs for meaningful stakeholder involvement should be factored in whenever any new designation or change of designation occurs.

Raising awareness of the right and possibility to participate in, inter alia, conservation planning and management

It was noted that in Western Europe the environmental agenda was pushed by the NGOs and this was the case in Slovakia, but in countries such as Romania, NGOs had much less legitimacy as there was little unity between them and much conflict among themselves and with government. By contrast, in Western Europe, NGOs were at once critical of government but also working with the civil service behind the scenes. The discussion raised the issue of who might lead in Central and Eastern Europe/post-socialist countries? One suggestion was the European Union through its requirements. Legislation was also suggested. In Slovakia, for example, the UN Economic Commission for Europe Aarhus Convention³ entered into the Landscape and Nature Protection Act. Scientists were also suggested because they were respected as impartial but it depended on the individual whether they wanted to act.

³ This links environmental rights and human rights and acknowledges an obligation to future generations. It establishes that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders and links government accountability and environmental protection, focusing on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context.

Annexe I – What are the factors that seem to lead to success? How do these relate to the type of participation used?

Informative

- Presentations within different decisional level – local, national, international
- Information through informative materials – CDs, Pamphlets, posters
- Funding and logistic support
- Announcing the area of the new national park
- Willingness of stakeholders to participate
- Good rapport (liaison reps)
- Change of the law in nature conservation
- Clear objectives
- Good communication

Consultative

- Questionnaires
- Funding and logistic support
- Asking for expertise → local, national, international
- Willingness of stakeholders to participate
- Good communication
- Effort of decision-makers to engage local people and that the local people feel listened to
- Neutrality (a mediator in the process)
- Clear objectives
- Efficient communication
- Enabling legislation (Romania, Kyrgystan, Uzbekistan)
- Improved understanding of PA objectives (and struggles)

Functional

- Efficient communication
- Good communication
- Willingness of stakeholder to participate
- Funding and logistic support
- Improving legislation with better knowledge about particular situations from the legislators (Romania)
- Flexibility of PA structures (including individuals) Uzbekistan
- Working groups, meeting, workshops with local stakeholders
- Motivation
- Clear objectives

Collaborative

- Willingness of partners to work together
- Team work → well defined roles for members
- Mutual respect of the different viewpoints
- Clear communication of the objectives → understanding
- A lot of time and patience!
- Empowerment (giving women a voice)
- Birdlife Slovenia (Dopps), collaboration with government for Natura 2000 preparation enables growth in resources and profile – could be threatened by professionalisation and looming conflict ?? gov plans for windmills ???
- 2 Participatory env tourism research organisations from Poland - Collaborative internally and in networking due to small face to face familial structure of the organisations
- Biodiversity monitoring in local bird club in UK – collaborative – local conservation governance ie local councils use information gathering by researchers. Formally and informally. Allows members to have sense of influence.
- UK Phenology network – growth achieved through highly successful collaboration with Woodland Trust and hugely important BBC Springwatch and Autumnwatch programmes
- Good communication
- Procedural legislation (Kyrgyz republic)
- Clear objectives
- Consultants – experienced specialists
- Periodic evaluation of activities, feedback and reflection
- Economic interest (earn some money)
- Efficient communication
- Public meeting allowing PPL to express their opinions
- Clear support of participation process in all senses: technical, financial and in the terms of implementation
- Improved understanding of local meanings of nature and its protection (Uzbekistan, Romania)
- Building trust – tangible promises, honest, willingness to empathize (Romania)
- Motivation

Transformative

- Local initiative to continue the project
- Involvement of local stakeholders in management plan design process
- Willingness of decision-makers to **acknowledge** points that emerged after participation
- Periodic evaluation of activities; feedback and reflection
- Consultants – experienced specialists

- Motivation
- Funding and logistic support
- Clear objectives
- Efficient communication
- Clear leader with vision and resources (time) to inspire and organise others
- Relevance of the project to the stakeholders → people wanted to be involved and could see the benefits from participating
- Team work → well defines roles for the members
- Good communication
- Clear definition/recognising all related stakeholders

Other

Participation often varies between stakeholders and over the project duration → difficult to categorise

Annexe II – What common or broad themes have emerged so far?

GROUP 1

- Property rights
- Funds
- Conflicts managing
- Resources management
- Communities opposite interests (public awareness)
- Administration of resources in PAs
- Human impact on PAs (overgrazing, uncontrolled tourism)
- Economic activities

GROUP 2

- Broader emerging concepts of @conservation@ to include more than just the environment and also involve traditional knowledges, practices, culture (more holistic), heritage etc
- Different views (and actions) between different generations (old vs young)
- Involvement of communities
- Linking human and environmental needs
- Conflict (and conflict resolution)
- Dialogue between stakeholders

GROUP 3

- Unresolved conflicts
- Polarized positions
 - Case specific studies needed
 - Common language needed to improve understanding
- Many protected area designations are initiated without community involvement therefore their input on initial decisions is lacking
- Preconceived perceptions protected areas – communities

GROUP 4

- Governmental institutions - people's everyday life
- Too strict, suddenly enforced “foreign” rules (e.g. mushroom collection)
- Inherent conflicts inside the community
- Collecting data is fine but when it comes to threatening one's (land) property
- ...
- Generation gap (different perceptions, transfer of knowledge)

- Respecting and including people's knowledge and experiences in nature conservation
- "Introducing" rangers (functions' conflicts)

GROUP 5

- Linking human and environmental needs
- Provide solutions so local people have livelihoods
- Need immediate benefits
- "Nature" is value based, knowledge and practice is dynamic and hybrid
- Split loyalties of rangers (and others?) = internal conflict
- PA designations/later change were made without consultation
- Recurrent misunderstanding of property rights

Annexe III – Transcription of output sheets from the final discussion period: challenges for this symposium

WHAT KINDS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESS HAVE BEEN MOST USED AND WHY? WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN USED AND WHY?

- Referring to the ladder of participation from informative to transformative it becomes more difficult.
- The initiating organisations do not really wish transformative participation.
- Most of the programmes are at their initial stages and so are using the first stages mostly.
- Collaborative and transformative pragmatic approach – used if government needs public support. Transformative is possibly impossible in principle?
- Transformative – forest owners organize themselves to contribute/change the forestry law → possible if an “internal group” gets organized and is strong enough.
- Philosophical discussions - people rarely self-organize unless it is crucial for them
- Is there a category beyond transformative? Where communities are already in control but it's not formally recognized e.g. traditional farmers ,,, but then this is practice

WHAT HAVE THE EXPERIENCES BEEN OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED? WHY?

Positive

- “Conservation” is made relevant, reformulated in RELEVANT terms (eg in terms of animal health for herders)
- FACILITATORS are involved to provide knowledge & social skills
- They have FUN
- Information flows freely
- There is RECOGNITION (of contributors eg PATA in environmental monitoring)
- Process takes the form of an ongoing DIALOGUE/CONVERSATION over time (TRUST BUILDING)
- Everyone has a drink together
- CELEBRATIONS of achievements

Negative

- EXPECTATIONS are RAISED but not MET → LOSS OF TRUST which is difficult to repair
- They form part of EXCLUDED GROUPS (e.g. Roma, ethnicity, religious groups)
- Traditional practices are CRIMINALIZED
- Project offers concrete resources, not go empty handed
- Research fatigue sets in NOT TOO MANY surveys

WHAT HAVE THE OUTCOMES BEEN OF THE PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCES AND WHY?

- Better and long term stable plan with local acceptance and support (SK)
- Conflicts didn't stop although communities gained advantages in negotiation (RO)
Why: it needs longer time and more money and people COMMENT: it may save money in the future
- Learning from the experiences and mistakes of others
- Soft skills (communication mediation education) of PA managers
- PA administrators and local communities work towards the same goals
- Learning about the others needs and opinions
- Sustainable management in the long run
- Well informed public and stakeholders (plus tools for communication)

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT SUCCESS THE MOST?

- Clear objectives and strategy to achieve them
- Use of lessons learned from other projects → best practices
- Good leadership and facilitation -- appropriate people in right places
- Communication – effective and transparent
- Need commitment to capacity building and delegation in the project team
- Proper identification of target groups and their needs
- Focused and detailed planning to minimize the risks of problems at different project stages
- Project needs to be relevant to needs context and available time and resources including money
- Facilitate involvement and motivate volunteers (rewards are good practice!)
- Right mix of personalities and luck
- Willingness of decision-makers to acknowledge participatory inputs
- Learn property and use rights
- Having some goals that are achievable to demonstrate some small success to encourage the process
- Trust between stakeholders (no corruption is a precondition)
- Appropriate legislative framework that fits reality and context
- Need to work towards managing conflicts (links to trust) at local and institutional levels
- Important to map actors and their hidden interests and to use this in designing the participation or all efforts will fail and it will be a waste of resources and reduce confidence
- Perhaps sometimes participation is not the most appropriate way to achieve certain conservation goals, and there may be a different way to deal with the problem because it requires high skills and resources and using it/doing it badly could actually have detrimental effects. In an example to control a quarry the participation process opened the decision-makers mind but the land use plan failed and it would have been better to buy the land.. Another example when it failed was when the people involved

were not truly representative of the community – it would have been better to map the actors first and this would also have assessed whether the communities were really ready to participate.

- This discussion raises the issue of success? Are we talking about the success of the participatory process or the success of the activities – need to distinguish – there could be a very successful participatory process but it doesn't necessarily mean that the conservation of biodiversity is successful.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS DO WE HAVE [INCLUDING POLICY AND LEGISLATION] FOR PARTICIPATORY CONSERVATION IN POST-COMMUNISTS CONTEXTS?

- Set minimum standards (includes transparency of communication, procedures, etc) for level of involvement of defined groups of potential stakeholders (spatial, interest, etc.)
 - Different situations can require different minimum standards (eg imminent threat to drastic population decline of a population)
- For designation/changing of designation, time and costs for meaningful stakeholder involvement should be factored in
- Raising awareness of the right and possibility to participate in, inter alia, conservation planning and management
- QU: what model is there for Central and Eastern Europe?
 - The model for Western Europe was that the environmental agenda is pushed/led by NGOs, while in tropical countries much of the knowledge for sustainable resource use rests with traditional communities, this is dominant in the agenda.
- QU who might lead in Central and Eastern Europe?
 - EU.
 - NGOs in Slovakia.
 - NGOs have much less legitimacy in Romania, always fighting among themselves and with government. In Western Europe NGOs are critical but at the same time work closely with civil service behind the scenes.
 - Legislation e.g. the Aarhus convention entered into the Landscape and Nature Protection Act of Slovakia
- What about science – it is often respected? Widen context to academics – yes respected as impartial but whether they want to, or have the power to, depends on the individual.