EV5V-CT92-0135

DECIDING ABOUT WASTE FACILITIES SITING: LESSONS FROM CASES OF SUCCESS IN SEVEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

SUMMARY FINAL REPORT

JUNE 1994

Key words : policy-making; actors; institutionalisation; waste.

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OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the research project was to draw theoretically as well as policy relevant lessons from an investigation of the decision-making processes for the creation and siting of toxic and/or domestic waste facilities.
The research was based on the assumption that a crucial condition to improve public policies effectiveness is to learn from cases of success. The aim was to identify the 'positive factors' facilitating decision-making processes, and the conditions for dissemination of these factors in different situations (and/or to reproduce them adopting a strategic approach to project management).

II. METHODOLOGY

The research was based on the analysis of seven case studies in seven countries. The countries considered in the project were: Spain, Italy, France, The Netherlands, and Switzerland, and two Eastern European countries, Slovenia and Hungary.

The main criterion for selecting the case studies was the 'success' of the decision-making process. Success is defined as the ability to build (and possibly operate) a facility in a reasonable time within a given geographical framework. The work programme comprised six main steps.

Step 1 - Theoretical Framework
A common theoretical framework has been used by the teams involved in the research. It was based on the policy analysis literature and focused on the identification of the relevant actors, their resources and their patterns of interaction in order to explain why a certain decision had been taken.

Step 2 - Case Study Analysis, First Phase: Chronology
This phase was based on the reconstruction of the events that define the decision-making process. The objective of this phase was to define the 'frame' of the decision-making process, from two different points of view: the chronology was oriented to identify the "historic boundaries" of the process, but, at the same time, the analysis of events was useful for mapping the policy network, that is to be used to identify the actors involved in the decision-making process. The outcome of the first phase of the research project was the chronology and a first list of the actors involved.

Step 3 - Case Study Analysis, Second Phase: Actors Analysis
The second phase was dedicated to analyse the main actors involved in the decision-making process, focusing on the following elements: a) problem definition; b) objectives; c) resources.
The outcome of the second phase was a description of the main actors involved, based on the analysis of the elements listed above.

Step 4 - Case Study Analysis, Third Phase: Patterns of Interactions Analysis
The third phase was based on the definition of the policy network structure and the patterns of interaction among actors.
The aim of this phase was to define a general interpretation of the case-study, to be used to identify the main factors that facilitate the success of the decision-making process.

Step 5 - Comparative Analysis and Policy Recommendations
This step was based on the comparison of the seven case studies, and in particular of the success factors identified.
The focus for what concerns policy recommendations was on the definition of manipulable elements of the decision-making processes, in order to facilitate success.

Step 6: Plans for Dissemination
Three main forms of dissemination were envisaged: a) publication of specific parts of the research in form of "Working Papers" by each participating institution; b) publication of a book including all the case studies, the comparative analysis and the policy recommendations; c) preparation of a 'training package' that could be adopted in public administration schools.

III. MAIN RESULTS

The following cases of success of waste facility siting have been selected and analysed, on the basis of the Theoretical Framework developed by the coordinator, and following the steps summarised in the previous point II.:

- Spain: the siting of the industrial waste treatment plant in Palos de la Frontera (1986-1993)
- France: the siting of the TREDI Centre for treatment of industrial waste in Salaise (Isère) (1973-1993)
- The Netherlands: the siting of the VAM integrated waste treatment plant in Wijster (1986-1993)
- Italy: the siting of the Centre for treatment of industrial waste in Modena (1978-1994)
- Switzerland: the siting of the Ciba Geigy special waste treatment plant in Basle (1987-1993)
- Hungary: the siting of the hazardous waste treatment plant in Garé (Baranya County)
- Slovenia: the siting of the industrial waste treatment plant in Lendava (1989-1994)

The main results of the project regarded the identification of the success factors, and the identification of the indication in terms of improvement of public policy effectiveness.
These can be summarised as follows.

Success factors have been distinguished in “background” factors, “short term” and “long term” factors.

Background factors have to do with the context in which the decision making process takes place: they are connected with the issue of waste facility siting, but are not generated within the process. They include :

1. *The level of industrial culture*. The acceptability of waste treatment facilities is vastly facilitated by the fact that the communities involved have a tradition of industrialisation that makes them familiar with the world of modern production and more in general with the complexities of technological change;
2. *The dominance of a political pro-development policy orientation.* All things being equal, the establishment of a new waste treatment facility seems to be easier if the concerned community (or the concerned communities) share the idea that the economic development - as opposed to the preservation of the existing level of wealth - is an important, and legitimate, political goal.
3. *The level of institutionalisation of policy-making*. The main finding of this research in this respect was that a *certain* level of institutionalisation of policy making and implementation is an important situative variable in explaining successful outcomes. In practice this means that a situation in which there is no procedure defined for dealing with the problem of siting a waste treatment facility, or, to the contrary, the existing procedure is too strict in legal and/or bureaucratic terms, seems to be a very unlikely candidate for a successful outcome.

Short term factors are actually the ones that are directly related to the process, and that are manipulated by the actors involved. They include:
1. Factors concerning the problem

The chances of success are higher if the actors share the idea that the problem is not one of waste disposal, but one of waste production. Or, the success will be easier if the concerned actors share the belief that *they have a waste problem to solve*, where the emphasis is on the fact that it is *their problem*.
2. Factors concerning the stake

A *careful stake management* is a necessary ingredient of the recipe for success. Apart from the stress on best available technology, and location within existing industrial estates, one should obviously refer to the question of the need to *clarify very well from where waste* - mainly if it is toxic - *is coming*. Stake management, in this form, means, therefore, the attempt to find the negotiable issues, and the readiness to alter the project in order to adjust the different positions of the actors. Within this frame, the *ability to make package deals*, linking the building permit for the proposed plant with some other issue of public or private interest, and the attitude toward *negotiation and bargaining*, are very important elements for facilitating success.
3. factors concerning the rules of the game:

A first important element here is the ability to *control the openness of the network*. Here what matters is the attempt to avoid the opposite dangers of polarisation, brought about by too few actors, and of a never-ending and cyclical debate, generated by a too large network. One should pay attention to the fact that in the decision making process are *represented the different categories of actors*, i.e. the scientific community, the business community, the representatives of grass roots organisations, the political actors, and so on. To have different point of views is more often than not an advantage, for the simple reason that, in case of conflict, they can provide the needed redefinition of the problem, in such terms to make it acceptable to the opponents.

The second point concerning the rules of the game is also connected with the need for *flexible institutionalisation*, but in this case what comes into consideration is not the structure of the interaction, but rather the way in which it takes place, in two words the *procedural rules*.

What is more interesting is one less expected feature that can be called the widespread use of *informal agreements*. By this term we mean the existence of a negotiation, between public bodies and/or private firms, that goes usually beyond the strict provisions of the law, in some cases setting stricter standards that legally prescribed, in others defining rights to compensation to the affected interests.

Long term factors. The research team attempted to draw from the analysis some indications on how waste treatment policies could be redefined in order to make them more effective.
On the basis of more general considerations - the need to fully implement the polluter pays principle, the rationale of considering the waste industry as a perfectly normal activity, and the dangers of an overloaded public sector - it is possible to suggest a *possible optimal setting* for the problem in hand.

The first point is that the task of regulating waste production as well as waste treatment and disposal should stay with public administration and namely with the technical components of environmental policy. The second point is that there is room for a total privatisation of the waste treatment industry, that implies not only the demise of the State or Municipality-owned plants, but also a repeal of the existing barriers to full competition, including the licensing system. A related point concerns the transitional phase. It is indeed possible that, in order to induce better behaviours on the part of the waste producers, some sort of financial incentive should be devised. The final point regards the role of scientific and technical guarantee. Here there is an argument in favour of some sort of independent authority, possibly linked to the international scientific community, unburdening the public bodies of this task.

IV. SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AND POLICY RELEVANCE

(i) Scientific interest and novelty

For what concerns the scientific interest of the research it should be pointed out that the analysis of seven different decision making processes for waste facility siting, in seven different European countries, on the basis of the same methodology, was, in itself, an important result. The international comparison of decision making processes (and in particular of success processes) is a challenge not only in the field of environmental policies, but more, in public policies in general.
The extension to eastern European Countries contributed sensibly to the research, broadening the scope of the project. The knowledge about decision making processes in these countries is, so far, very limited.

(ii) Policy relevance

The identification of indications for improving public policy effectiveness in the field of waste facility siting constituted the main objective of the research project. Furthermore, the results included some suggestions for the improvement - in the long term - of waste treatment policies.
These aspects are summarised at the previous point III.