

Comparisons of an Anse La Raye / Canaries Zoning Exercise with that of the Soufriere Marine Management Area Experience: A Case Study

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) has led to the adoption of similar approaches to management in other areas along the coast which have also been characterized by resource-use conflicts. The presence of volcanism is far more evident in Soufriere than in the Canaries/Anse la Raye area. The former is characterized by a rugged topography with the famous Pitons as the most dominating feature of the shoreline. The seabed slopes rapidly to great depths only meters from the shoreline. Soufriere is also home to the most productive coral reef systems on the island.

Canaries/Anse la Raye on the other hand, while still characterized by a very rugged topography, slopes and valleys are much gentler. There are no distinguishing landmarks and the percentage of coral cover is far lower than that of the Soufriere area. Both areas are rich in terms of agricultural fertility, tourism potential and coastal fishery resources, with agriculture and fishing being the two traditional income generating industries.

Over the past decade the fast growing tourism industry has led to much conflict between resource users of the Soufriere area. Tourism growth in the Canaries/Anse la Raye area has been much slower although evidence of rising conflicts has been observed particularly in Anse Cochon, one of the major seining bays. The communities of Canaries, Anse la Raye as well as Soufriere have historically relied on the reef and pelagic fishery to sustain livelihoods. Like Soufriere fishermen, seining activities play a vital role in the Canaries/Anse la Raye fishery, with a few trap fishers and spear fishermen playing a lesser role.

In 1986 an attempt to resolve conflicts in the Soufriere area resulted in the declaration of a number of Marine Reserves (MRs) and Fishing Priority Areas (FPAs). The Rouseau bay north of Anse la Raye village, used mainly by fishermen of Anse la Raye and neighboring areas, was declared a FPA. The Anse Cochon Bay was also declared a FPA with the reefs just north of this bay being declared a MR.

Anthropogenic impacts on the marine environment in Soufriere have had a profound effect in this area but of a magnitude much smaller than that of the Canaries/Anse la Raye area. Of greatest concern in Soufriere is sediment run-off,

the occasional discharge of chemicals associated with the manufacture of oil and soap, solid waste deposition in the sea, indiscriminate fishing practices, as well as damage to reef areas by anchoring, diving and snorkeling. The impacts in the Canaries/Anse la Raye area are associated with inadequate solid waste management, sediment run-off, anchor damage to corals, coral harvesting and in some areas pollution by faecal coliforms.

The increasing use of the Canaries/Anse la Raye shoreline by tourism related activities is beginning to create user conflict. The potential for the escalation of conflict presents an immediate concern to traditional users of the marine environment as well as more recent users of the area. In order to preempt the increase in resource-use conflicts, key stakeholders have come together to develop a program of action utilizing the experiences gained from the establishment of the SMMA. It is expected that this process will result in a user participation scheme based on equitable arrangements.

THE PROCESS - OVERVIEW

History

According to Andre-Bigot, 1995, both fishing and tourism sectors traditionally "claimed" open access to the marine environment. This view in an area where space is limited led to conflicts between trap fishers and scuba divers, and between net fishers and yachters. That is, fishermen were faced with tampering of their fish traps by divers and yachts anchoring in prime areas used by seine fishermen. One of the original approaches to solving these conflicts, was to establish a number of FPAs and MRs along the coastline from Anse la Raye to Soufriere. As in the case of Soufriere this did not resolve the conflicts since all the needs of all the users had not been adequately addressed by merely establishing FPAs and MRs.

New Approaches

It was clear that in the case of Soufriere a new approach had to be adopted to resolve the existing conflicts. In 1992, three key agencies: the Soufriere Development Foundation (SDF), the Department of Fisheries (DOF) and the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), met to re-examine this prolonged situation and grasp for fresh, new approaches for resolving the continuing conflicts (George, 1994). It was agreed that in order to resolve the conflicts all stakeholders had to be involved in the discussions at that point. It was felt that only by allowing each stakeholder the opportunity to participate fully that they would understand the views of each other and that the ensuing spirit of compromise would set the stage for resolution of the conflicts.

Over a period of two (2) years a series of broad-based consultations were held ensuring wide-scale, multiple representation by interest groups. The product of these consultations was a "Preliminary Agreement on the Use and Management

of Marine and Coastal resources in the Soufriere Region." The stakeholders agreed to a demarcation scheme which apportioned the area into five (5) zones: 1) MRs, 2) FPAs, 3) Recreational Areas, 4) Mooring Areas and 5) Multiple Use Areas.

The next step was the production of a management plan for the area. This plan is implemented under the SMMA banner utilizing a manager and rangers to oversee the day to day operations of the SMMA. The SMMA expects to become self-sufficient in the near future through its revenue generating schemes which includes the collection of fees from the sale of souvenirs, diving and yacht moorings.

While the development for a Canaries/Anse la Raye plan follows along the lines of that of the SMMA it is not yet known how it will evolve. It is unlikely however, that a similar management structure involving revenue generating mechanisms will be utilized, simply because the Canaries/Anse la Raye area is not likely to realize sufficient revenue to support a management structure. The vast number of persons that utilize the area are snorkellers, and at present do not pay user fees although this is being considered.

DISCUSSION

SMMA Experience

It is clear from the Soufriere experience that traditional methods of management tend to have much lower success rates than modern ones. However, in the approach to secure the sustainable use of resources, greater consideration should have been paid to the social and economic impacts which a zoning system might have on the livelihoods of the fishing community. Throughout the consultations those persons who were directly affected by user conflicts paid greater attention to the issues, while ensuring their full participation in the process. As a result those who saw no change in their status, such as the trap fishers, the restaurateurs and local pleasure craft owners were not as intimately involved and were not considered effectively in the zoning arrangements resulting in their marginalization.

The strategic planning exercise is aptly described by Clarke (1992), which is essentially to devise a program that would promote compatibility between economic development and the long term environmental and socio-economic needs of the community. Clarke's suggestion that while nature may be whole, the governmental response to the problems of habitat protection, fisheries promotion, pollution prevention and other coastal problems is to decompose these problems into smaller more administratively manageable pieces. It is this principal which characterized the planning process of the SMMA.

Despite the apparent solidarity expressed by the representatives of the fishing community to the process of conflict resolution, strong reservations about the effectiveness of the zoning plan were expressed by other members of that

fraternity. One of the commonest complaints as recognized by Andre-Bigot (1995), was that the new measures would fail to protect their access to the resource. The perception also was that the demarcation of the Soufriere shoreline seemed to favor the foreign visitor, over that of the fishers themselves and that the scuba diving sector should concede more to the fishing community (Sandersen, 1995).

Despite this renewed effort to get fishers involved in matters of immediate concern to them and to solicit their full participation in the management of their use of the marine areas in Soufriere, Sandersen discovered that the process of increased user-group involvement in Soufriere paradoxically cause fishermen to complain that they should be more involved in meetings of that nature. In further discussions between the writer and groups it was stated that the fishers themselves recognized limitations of their knowledge of the management process, but that some information and involvement creates a need for further information and involvement. However their main concern was that benefits to their community from their use of marine areas would not be diminished.

The absence of user involvement in the consultative process has led to the consideration of a rezoning of the entire Soufriere shoreline in a way which would seek to accommodate those user-groups most affected by the current demarcation. While it is recognized that current plans are not cast in stone, the emphasis on reviewing present arrangements is seen as a delay in the process towards finalization of the management plan. Severe criticism has been leveled at the authority of the SMMA for not providing adequate information to stakeholders. This is clearly the fault of the organizers but blame must also be laid on those stakeholders who faulted in reporting back to their respective organizations.

In the identification of participants for the Canaries/Anse-La-Rayé consultation these issues were considered in the selection of user-groups with an exhaustive list drawn up for the exercises. Every effort was made to ensure that intra-group representation reflects the complete range of interests of each user-group. Every attempt is also being made to ensure that all present and possible future user conflicts are addressed by the committees. While the Canaries/Anse-La-Rayé area is not fraught with the level of inter-group conflicts as is Soufriere and while the complexity of the issues are not as great, group concerns will be afforded the highest priority in the entire conflict-resolution exercise.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the Soufriere experience that careful consideration must be given to the selection and involvement of the stakeholders for participation in any exercise which attempts to resolve user-group conflicts and put in place a system of co-management for the use of common property resources. It is clear

also that tradition user-groups will always feel marginalized if arrangements appear not to weigh in their favor. This can effectively defeat any institutional setup as well as the principles of sustainable development.

Information dissemination must feature very strongly even before consultations begin, as it is only with the understanding of less knowledgeable user-groups can commitments be assured. Goals and outlines must be clear and distinct and be presented in an honest manner if trust is to be built into the system. There must be a clear understanding of the benefits of establishing protected areas if such mechanisms have to be accepted.

Delineating coastal areas into discreet management units is sometimes more complex than previously envisaged but it is only through this process and the establishment of local management authorities (LMA's) can management of the use of these areas be effective. Thus the SMMA and the Canaries/Anse-La-Raye process can be seen as the evolution of an Island Systems Management (ISM) plan, the new concept of management of small islands utilizing the principles of sustainable development in the development process.

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