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An Institutional Analysis of the integrated coastal Zone Management in France

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Summary

This paper is based on the findings of the European Union funded research programme COASTMAN comparing the conditions of emergence of Integrated Coastal Zone Management policy in three European countries (Norway, France and Greece). The particular case of the preparation and implementation of the French Littoral Law (1986) will be presented. It is an original attempt to legally frame the contradiction between economic development and nature conservation objectives in coastal areas. An association of a vague definitions of concepts and a rigid regulatory approach has not produced the expected outcome of what is viewed in Europe as the most ambitious legal tool to ensure a balanced development of coastal zone under strong anthropic pressure. Although many stakeholders are generally concerned in designing local term collective objectives of development and conservation, the law has given an overwhelming role to State institution under the motive of the difficulty to coordinate many opposed interests. In the meanwhile, France has undergone a deep process of decentralisation increasing the responsibility of locally elected bodies. This contradiction explains a large part of the globally negative appraisal of the implementation of the law while the need for is recognised by all.

Introduction

Anthropic actions on the littoral result from different sector-based policies, which are led independently by each economic sector. They all have different purposes and no coordination exists between the Ministries concerned. The development of coastal agriculture depends on the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Industry have their own Ministries, etc… Tourism remains apart; indeed, this economic sector does not depend on a single Ministry. The only common thing between these policies concerns the national and regional development. Local populations had to be maintained in their original locations. To achieve, it became necessary to develop the existing activities and to create new ones. Regional and national development is a constant concern for policy makers. In order to prevent the populations from moving to the large urban areas, public authorities defend the necessity to maintain some in-deficit activities in the neighbouring areas.

Coastal development as a source of debate

It took several decades before policy makers started to worry about the littoral and its development. In France, the first discussions resulted from a process initiated at an international level. Due to many international initiatives, the French authorities realised how important it was to maintain the ecological quality of coastal areas. The preservation of ecological and biological resources, the quality of the landscapes, and that of the coastal areas became a priority. In this context, we mention a few relevant international initiatives. The UNCLOS determines obligations to protect and preserve marine environments against pollution and fishing management. The convention RAMSAR aims at preserving the humid areas and the species. We could also quote the chapter 17 in the Agenda 21, which defends the development of ocean and coastal resources. The chapter states that “New approaches to marine and coastal area management and development are needed, approaches that are integrated in content and precautionary and anticipatory in ambit”. In 1993, the World Coast Conference took place in Noordwidje, in view to develop the capabilities of coastal states for ICZM, as well as to implement ICZM programs, according to the need mentioned in chapter 17 in Agenda 21.

The final report of the conference stated that: “Integrated coastal zone management involves the comprehensive assessment, setting of objectives, panning and management of coastal systems and resources, taking into account traditional, cultural, and historical perspectives and conflicting interests and uses; it is a continuous and evolutionary process for achieving sustainable development”. (Valcoast, 1997). The OCDE report on integrated coastal zone management (1993), as well as the Convention on biological diversity, and the Jakarta Mandate, are other examples.

France also played a part in this international movement. France participates with and ratifies certain conventions, and determines the areas that must be preserved. Besides, France develops at a national level its own environment coastal preservation policies. We’ll try to focus on the causes that led to the development of these policies, their implementation, and the various difficulties observed. At first, our concern will deal about the major features of the French littoral; we’ll present a short historical abstract of the occupation of the maritime public domain (DPM), as well as its system of property.

The laws in favour of the littoral preservation, and their difficult implementation will be discussed in a second part.

Since 1975, 51% of the French coastlines have been urbanised, among which 20% feature a high habitation density, with buildings, marinas, and roads to seaside resorts. Recently, golf courses, and thalassotherapy facilities have been built on the neighbouring greens areas…Since 1975, 180 marinas have been constructed, 100 construction projects for golf courses are being studied or completed on the French Riviera. Yet, “their profitability is more and more problematic” (Rouguan O. 1996). For some coastal regions, such as Languedoc Rousillon and Aquitaine, tourism development used to be planned by public authorities. Actually, in the frame of the regional and national development, the economic concern was at stake, and tourism seemed to be the best way to ensure a sustainable development. The French Administration’s involvement ended in 1983, further to the decentralisation Law. Most tourism facilities are built on the Maritime Public Domain (MPD), which legally belongs to the State Administration. A short historical abstract of the MPD juridical status will help us understand the reasons for its current occupation, and concreting…

The coastline juridical status

During the Capetian period, from 987 to 1328, France used to be divided into seigniorial domains or in Principalities rules by the lords. A similar principle was applied on the littoral…the rights of use of the sea were granted by the lords to the local population. The only fishing gears used were fix nets, and seashell collecting. The right of use was generally paid in fish. The Ordonnance de Moulins, in February 1566 tried to put an end to the lord’s sovereignty, confirming the principles of inalienability, and the non-prescriptible character of the Public domain. From this date on, alienations, or the constitution of rights on the public domain have become null and void. (L. Prieur, 2000). The coastline became the King’s domain.

The expression “marine coastline”, which corresponds to the actual definition of the MPD, will remain undefined until Colbert Ordonnance, in 1681. It stated, “The shore and the coastline would correspond to the area covered and uncovered during a maximum spring tide”. Any construction on the shore is prohibited since it could have a harmful impact on fishing and navigation. Because seashores are public, every one must have the right to use it, provided it doesn’t harm anybody else. As a result, every fix fishing gear became illegal.

After the French Revolution (1789), the king’s domain became the Nation’s domain. In 1890, the constituent assembly voted the “domanial code”, and put and end to the absolute inalienability. During the 19th century, many intellectuals considered that the concept of inalienability applied to the Nation’s goods was irrelevant. According to their nature, these should be divided into alienable and inalienable goods. Due to a collective use, some goods would belong to the public domain category. This category includes the sea, the shores, the harbours, haven and bays. These public goods are *a priori* reserved for a common service, and every citizen has a right of use. Yet, this it cannot result in an individual occupation. In some way, at that time, the public domain could be considered as a *res nillius* or *res communes* (belonging to all or to no one). Though it is not the owner, the State Administration remains the guardian and supervisor.

In the 20th century, two new concepts appeared and altered the status of the public domain: the public service, and the administrative property. Specialists of administrative law consider the public domain

as a property of the Sate Administration, or that of territorial communities. With this conception, the pubic domain becomes an exploitable wealth and a source of income for the owning communities (Mamantoff, 1997). There's a considerable change between the concept of the 19th century and that of the 20th. The public domain is not a collective anymore; now, it has a commercial value. These concepts influenced the jurisprudence, which gave rise to a new way of thinking about the public domain goods. Every good that is affected to a public use or service belongs to the public domain. Today, these elements determine the notion of public domain. If it has a commercial value, it could also become interesting for people who wish to occupy it. Tourism industry is more and more interested in having sea-close areas for the development of construction projects. It is uneasy to define a public use construction: a hotel or a supermarket could belong to this category. The jurisprudence will define a classification later.

It is obvious that a huge part of tourism facilities are built on the public domain. This has become possible due to the interpretation of a law, in date of 1807, which became the article L.64 of the Nation Domain code. Such an interpretation enables the State Administration to grant or authorise under certain conditions, marshes, sanded up areas, or lands that used to be covered by the sea and that are not anymore, dyking up, etc… Due to dyking up, a part of the French littoral has become part of the public domain. Seashore dry lands are inalienable. Dyking up is not a recent technique. It has been used in France since the 19th century. Yet, at that time, it was supposed to dry the marshes in order to create new cultivation grounds. In France, many humid zones have become polders. During the 20th century the reasons to dyke up have become slightly different. Indeed, today this process aims at making possible the construction of hotels and other facilities that will belong to the private domain. Since the law of 1963, the public domain has been extended considerably, since it includes the higher and lower sea marks, as well as the soil and subsoil of the territorial sea. It means that the areas that have been artificially separated from the sea belong to the MPD, unless there exist contrary dispositions of acts of concession acts. This is the basis that enables massive construction on the seashore.

Birth of a French environmental policy, from 1970 to 1980

The 1960s and 1970s, were characterised by the creation of a Ministry of the Environment, and then by a clear orientation towards an environmental policy. Many regulations relating to environment were voted during the 1960s (Water Law, impact studies, etc.) but no global text in favour of the protection of the environment was voted. The protection of the littoral, and later the concept of coastal management, are closely related to the implementation of an environmental policy.

The creation of a Ministry of the environment cannot be explained by a direct demand from the population, but it results from an answer to the political crisis that occurred in the whole country in May 1968. The creation of such a Ministry proves that the State Administration now intends to find solutions to concrete problems, rather than to enforce a political program. The new environmental policy must take into consideration the environment, as well as the quality of life. Because of this, the Ministry is also in charge of several other domains like hygiene, cultural and aesthetic heritage, the protection of Nature, etc… (Theys J. 1998).

During this period, the French environmental policy was very centralised. Yet, it should not be interpreted as uniform norms, or homogeneous policies enforced in the whole country. The administration services, which are scattered on the whole territory, prevent such an application. Their knowledge of the places enables the setting up of a management system designed according to the heterogeneity of the local situations. Such a process has become possible, since it is an environmental policy that is set up in accordance with the administrative grant of clearances and licences, the contents of which can be negotiated locally. Unfortunately, the policy didn't work that well for it did not intend to change the existing institutional system.
This last is supposed to implement the policy. Among the former institutions, none agreed to transfer any part of their competence to the new Ministry. The Ministry of the Environment did not have any budget, and had to collaborate with the other Ministries to enforce such a policy.

In spite of this, the global result of the period is not totally negative. Indeed, the awareness of the environmental question resulted in the creation of a few new institutions, such as the *Littoral Conservatory, Regional Parks, water quality agencies…*

A policy for the protection of the littoral

The preoccupations about the littoral appeared simultaneously with the creation of an environmental policy. On request of the DATAR (delegation for national development and regional action), a group comprised of several persons was in charge of studying the prospects for the development of the French littoral. This request fell within the scope of the national development, rather than that of the protection of the littoral. The report that was published after the study, proposed notably that the administration services should implement for experimentation schemes of aptitudes and use of the sea (SAUM), in four experimental areas: the Bay of Brest, the Gulf of Morbihan, the Pertuis d'Antioche, and the Bay of Hyères. The SAUM aims at defining zonings according to the different activities that take place in the maritime area concerned. These planning instruments do not have any juridical value and thus are not opposable to individuals. SAUM are the ancestors of the Sea Valorisation Schemes (SMVM) that were voted in the early 1980s.

The Littoral Conservatory

The littoral conservatory appeared further to the Picard Report. The mission in charge of the prospect studies had visited the United Kingdom in order to learn the way the English treated the question of the littoral. On the basis of the English experience, the Picard Report proposed the creation of the Littoral Conservatory in 1975. This institution aimed at leading a coastal area policy that would take into consideration a certain proportion of the inland areas. One of its missions consisted in preserving natural sites and biological balance, in littoral districts and around lakes with a surface of more than 1,000 hectares. The Conservatory has already acquired 25,000 hectares. Its action in favour of the preservation of Nature acts together with that developed in the frame of the Natural reserves, regional parks, and finally those initiated at the Departmental level thanks to the green area tax.

Littoral-based juridical changes will have to be done in this context. In the 1970s, the urbanisation of the littoral became especially intense on the MPD, and thus a large proportion of them were privatised.

For the first time ever, the situation was debated by the Cour des Comptes in 1973. The criticism dealt with two aspects. The first concerned the alteration of nature of the MPD, which resulted from the privatisation of areas gained upon the sea. As a consequence, the MPD, which was supposed to be reserved for public use, became private thus changing the nature of the use. The second aspect concerned the money that the State Administration received to alienate the MPD. It did not give any answer to this criticism, which was even confirmed by citizen criticisms a few years later.

The citizens protest against the MPD privatisation. The privatisation of the littoral, either by property developers or second homes, is perceived like a social injustice. The citizens who do not have the financial means to buy a second home, or who can't afford to spend their holidays in hotels or holiday villages, cannot access to the beaches anymore. "The principle of free public access to the beaches is an old French concept of law". Valin justified the prohibition of onshore building, referring to the Ordonnance of 1681, which stated that: "precisely, a public thing supposes that each one can use it; it is thus prohibited to use the public thing individually, granting oneself an permanent and exclusive right, thus causing a prejudice to the third». In practice, the principle of free access for everyone to the beach is at stake. The citizen cannot go to the beach freely because constructions prevent them from doing so.

The answer to this protestation arrived rapidly in the form of a note related to the MPD use, and coastal development. Its purpose consisted in quietening down the public opinion, yet without trying to find an answer to the question of the MPD urbanisation. Again, this question became the object of the 1979 Decree that aimed at controlling the construction of marinas without putting an end to dyking up. The State Administration asked onshore house or hotel owners to open public paths around their properties, in order to provide the public with a free access to the beach. Again, the littoral law will reconsider the question of the littoral urbanisation in 1986.

The 1980s, a change in environment policies

The 1980s were marked by considerable changes within the policy making process, but also in terms of environment. The 1983 decentralisation law marked the end of a centralised policy-making system, which from then on became more local. On behalf of the State Administration, the Prefect exerted control on the decisions *a posteriori*. The law intended to set up "an harmonious balance between the

central power and local communities" (art1). A balance based on the free management of the cities, departments and regions. The local executive power would pass from the Prefect's authority to that of the Presidents of the Regional and Departmental Councils. Local communities would have a certain liberty of initiative that of course would respect the law, the national interests and the public order. The Prefect's role consists in controlling these obligations (Bodiguel, 1996).

In addition, the external services of the Ministries were decentralised, and thus represented at the regional or departmental level. They depended on the Prefect's authority who managed their actions. This process just reinforced the local influence of the State Administration, resulting in a more decentralised decision. The presence of the administration services at a local level enables on the one hand a better knowledge of the local situation, but on the other hand, it reinforces the position of the engineer corps in the country's policy making process.

The difficult implementation of an environmental policy in France

First of all, it concerns the role of the ministry of Environment regarding environmental policy, a role that was not reinforced during this period. The existing administration refused to give up certain competences in favour of the Ministry. This is the reason why its operating budget was not important, thus preventing the implementation of an environment policy. Whereas other Ministries were represented locally by an administration service, it was not the case for the environment. The creation of such a service became effective in 1991. Up to then, the treatment of environmental matters was processed by other administration services, depending on their nature. According to the nature of the question at stake, it could fall within the competence of the Departmental Direction of Agriculture and Forests, or Departmental Directions of Equipment, Direction of Social Affairs, of Maritime Affairs. As far as environment was concerned, though its competence was limited to certain subjects, the most relevant service was probably the Regional Direction of Architecture and Environment (DRAE). In this service, the staff was basically comprised of engineers who had to face the hostility of other engineers from other services. The DRAE had a very limited role in the implementation of departmental or even regional policies.

The creation of the DIREN

The necessity to create a service entirely dedicated to environment became obvious in the1980s and was finally completed in the early 1990s, thanks to the Prime Minister of that time. The logic that led to this creation could be summed up as follows: "at first we had thought that it would be possible to make the existing ministries aware of the environmental question. Today we know it was not a good solution. As a consequence, it seems that a large independent Ministry of the Environment has become necessary". (p 54 AFIAE report, in Lascoumes et Bourhis, 1997).

The existing corps of engineers did not agree with the creation of a new corps. There again, they would not give up their competences to ecologist engineers. In addition, we observed the opposition from different ministries that used to have a role to play in environmental matters: Agriculture, Industry, and Equipment. In the end, after a long and harsh negotiation, local services depending on the Ministry was created. These are the DIREN; their staff is comprised of engineers who come from already existing corps.

Decentralisation and environment laws.

In 1982, the decentralisation law did not integrate the matter of environment. There was a bad repartition of competences between territorial and national authorities. The law granted to the cities some responsibilities regarding their management. Though departments had financial means due to the green areas tax, they had no structures yet. Finally, the regions could not afford to play their natural role of environment integrators in the economic development.

The excessive number of cities in France (36,000) is a real obstacle to the implementation of environmental policies. Yet, this number enhances the development of inter-communality. The gathering of the cities within inter-municipal associations, have become frequent in France. These gatherings enable the enforcement of environmental policies at a larger level that that of the city, though lower than that of the department.

The protection of the littoral

During the 1980s, the protection of the littoral became a priority. This area had become the object of multiples uses, and was also more and more urbanised. It was high time to take measures in order to control and slow down the littoral urbanisation, to be able to guarantee its future preservation.
In 1984, a planning juridical instrument only designed for the sea was voted. SMVM, Sea Valorisation Schemes, were slightly changed after 1986.
First of all, we will the main purposes of the instrument, and then, we'll focus on the present littoral planning instruments.

Littoral law

Just like mountains, the littoral must be preserved as a fragile and sensitive area. According to this principle, the French parliament voted the Mountain law in 1985, and the Littoral law in 1986. In brief, the law intends to guarantee the development or maintain the economic activities, and ensure the protection of the littoral. Indeed, the law is not designed to put an end to the economic development. On the contrary, it aims at creating a balance between the preservation of the environment and the development of economic activities. Obviously, both are contradictory. To find a balance is not an easy thing. Usually, the respective interests are not the same, and most of the time they're even opposed.
The law also aims at putting an end to dyking up.
What is the result of these 14 years of experience? Briefly, we are going to focus on two major elements of the law, and we'll try to analyse the conflicts that have appeared on the littoral since the end of this period. Finally, we'll focus on the two planning tools that intend to complete the law: the zoning regulations (POS) and SMVM.

The text

The littoral law concerns all municipalities located along the seashore, salt marshes, and inland lakes (>1,000 ha). Municipalities along estuaries and deltas located down the salt-water limit, contribute to the economic and ecological balance. A Decree fixes the list of these municipalities, further to the consultation of their municipal council. Fourteen years later, the decree has not been enacted yet. The judge has the power of interpretation.

As far as the littoral law is concerned, "littoral is a geographical entity which demands a specific management, protection and valorisation policy". In order to set up the policy, coordination between the State Administration and the local authorities has become necessary. In other words, the littoral law tries to implement an integrated coastal zone management, the first condition of which is coordination.

The major innovations brought by the law consist in prohibiting construction within a 100-metre wide area, starting from the seashore. In addition, the sensitive and specific spaces to preserve now have to be mentioned in the zoning regulation documents (POS).

1- The 100-metre wide littoral area.
In non-urbanised spaces, constructions within a 100-metre wide area are prohibited. The regulation excludes the constructions of facilities dedicated to public services or economic activities requiring the immediate proximity of the water. These exceptions concern harbour facilities (public facilities), or seashell farming, fishing, etc… Agricultural hydraulic works may be authorised provided that a public enquiry is effected before.

2- Obligation of protection and definition of the preserved areas.
Municipalities must define the preserved spaces, and include them in their zoning regulation plan (POS). In order to make this possible, the municipal council must vote the creation of a POS. The designation of these areas is not the responsibility of the municipality; it falls within the competence of the Departmental Direction of Equipment (DDE), which informs the municipality of its decision. Though most of the time, municipalities contest this procedure, they cannot refuse the decision. Indeed, in that case, the Prefect would not sign their POS. Which sites belong to this category?

- Remarkable or characteristic sites of the littoral's natural or cultural heritage, or sites of exceptional quality or interest.
- Environments necessary to the durability of biological balances or having an ecological interest.

Instruments of development.
Before we focus on the global result of the State Administration's littoral policy, it seems to be important to present certain development instruments, which are enforceable on the littoral: the POS (zoning regulation plan), and the SMVM (Sea Valorisation Schemes).

POS
The littoral area, and more particularly the use of the Maritime Public Domain (MPD) can be a major source of income for a municipality. As an example, the building of a sailing harbour corresponds to a large proportion of a municipality's budget. Many of them wish to transform their fishing harbour into a marina or just build a new one. Because of this, some municipalities have initiated a zoning of the sea. It is quite similar to the plan enforceable ashore, the POS. The POS was created in 1967 and it defines the general regulations regarding the use of the soil, at the level of a municipality (art. L 123.1 Code of Urbanism). The territory of the town is divided into different zones, which correspond to a given activity or use (habitation, industry, etc…). This planning instrument was designed for inland areas; though its application is much more difficult in a marine area, "marine POS" exist in many municipalities. At the occasion of juridical litigations, the Conseil d'Etat was driven to prohibit certain constructions or activities under the pretext that these activities were not mentioned on the POS. The application of a POS on the Maritime Public Domain constitutes the basis to justify the existence of certain activity in given areas.

The SMVM (Sea Valorisation Scheme)
This juridical instrument was supposed to become the key component of the littoral development. It is the first text that concerns the protection of the coastal zones, and unlike the POS, it takes into first consideration the sea, and then the land. The SMVM is comprised of two parts: the first is technical, and the second is political. The technical section, which includes the maritime zoning, is quite easy to realise. Obviously, it is a bit more difficult for the political part. Indeed, the trouble is that the State Administration elaborates the SMVM, and local authorities have only a role of consultation. In the end, it means that the actors that are supposed to be the most concerned by the instrument play the smallest part in its elaboration. Generally speaking, local communities are reticent to any project set up by the State Administration. Actually, the decentralisation should enhance their competence, and it is not case here. The second difficulty in the SMVM implementation is due to the dimension of the area where it is supposed to be applied. Most of the time, this area covers several departments or regions. Obviously, the objectives of a region are not necessarily those of a neighbouring territory.

Only one SMVM has been completed since their date of creation, in 1983. It concerns the Etang de Thau. Its success results probably from the limited dimension of the area. Besides, the different interests were basically the same, because they concerned water quality. Professional or amateur fishermen, nautical activities and municipalities all agreed to improve the quality of the Etang de Thau. Due its important size, the SMVM covers the maritime part and not the inland slopes which bring the water. Yet, in order to have an efficient SMVM, it is must be completed by the enforcement of the existing water legislation. In France, there exists a specific instrument for water matters, the SDAGE, which is quite similar to a SMVM.

Criticism of the juridical aspect of the littoral law
The text of law doesn't mention the definition of a certain number of notions that are used. In practice, these notions are not easy to understand or interpret. For instance, seashore close areas, remarkable sites and landscapes, 100-metre wide area, or urbanisation divisions…

These notions are more or less defined by the law, and they are a source of conflict. The most debated concerns the 100 metre-wide areas.

The enforcement of the littoral law has changed throughout the years. During a first period, from 1986 to 1990, it could not be enforced for social and political reasons, as well as for the non-publishing of certain decrees. From 1991 to 1995, the law could be enforced through the impetus given by the Administrative courts of Nice and Montpellier, supported by the Conseil d'Etat. There, the protective character of the law predominated. Since 1995, the trend consists in finding a balance between economic development and environment protection.

The jurisprudence analysis concerning administrative jurisdictions reveals that it plays a more and more important part in the source of law. Since 1992, and up to 1995, the number of trials has considerably increased. The south of France represents a total of 50 % of the conflicts, and the department of Finistère is at the second place, with 12%. In the south, huge operations of development form the basis of most litigation. On the contrary, in Finistère individual planning permissions are more problematic.

Who are the applicants?

Associations play an important part. Fifty six percent of the decisions of Administrative judges were made further to the recourse of an association. Most of the time, urbanism documents or large operations of development are concerned. Individuals usually make the other recourses. Regarding the importance of an association in a conflict, we thought it would be worth focusing on their nature. At first, these associations pretend to be defenders of the nature. Detailed studies show that actually, they are comprised of neighbours who defend the idea, or the vision of their original living environment.

Discussion

The littoral law, completed by instruments of development, form the legislative basis to implement an integrated coastal management. The Legislator thought it was high time to react due to a massive urbanisation of the littoral. The will of the legislator, which consisted in controlling the urbanisation, was not totally independent from the political changes that occurred during the same period. The protest of the citizens against this urbanisation, the spectacular rise of the Green party in the French political life drove the legislator to take into consideration the question of the environment, and more particularly in sensitive areas. The experience proves that the initial goals of the littoral law, that is to say economic development and protection, do not coexist easily. On the one hand, because regional and national development is a priority, the legislator wishes to maintain or develop economic activities. On the other hand, he has to admit that these zones must be preserved. Due to the imprecision of the law on certain aspects, the judge's interpretation is given a greater competence. Most decisions that are taken by judges reveal that they tend to favour the preservation of the environment. For the moment, there is a contradiction between the will of the legislator and that of the judge.

The existence of an ecologist party at a national level has been playing a major part in the awareness of the environment fragility in all parties. Yet, this is probably due to the importance of so many voices, during election periods. Their worrying about the environment remains questionable. Indeed, in the frame of local elections, the green party has always had a certain success. This is certainly the reason why political parties have a "greener speech". They had to win back electors.
Unfortunately, there was not a real awareness of the environmental question in the definition of the policies. The very little means of the Ministry of the Environment, and its limited competence partly explain such a weakness. The second reason must be sought in the civil society. The lack of interest for environmental questions that is obvious at a political level also exists in the society, though electoral results are usually good. There are very few local organisations to defend the environment. Basic citizens do not really perceive the interest of getting involved in such an organisation. Generally speaking, French citizens are not very involved in the decisional process, and more particularly regarding the general matters. The citizen is ready to act when it has to defend its corporative interest or its personal living environment. Such a lack of interest, as well as a lack of will from the authorities result in a difficult implementation of any form of management. This deficit of citizenship in the decisional process does not only concern environmental questions. It is a fundamental characteristic of the relationships between citizens, politicians, and administration in France.

This lack of interest does not mean that France is deprived of any efficient management system regarding a natural or exploited resource. The process of implementation of such systems is too often linked to the will of a single person, whereas it should be the concern of the community. Generally speaking, these persons are politicians who have the power to gather the actors concerned around a table, and make them agree on the necessity to preserve the resource. Behind common interests, individual motivations are hardly concealed. Anyway, it doesn't matter, and the result is pretty positive in terms of collective management. Many examples of that kind exist to defend the quality of water. Unfortunately, those that concern the littoral remain quite rare. This is probably due to the complexity of the interactions in coastal areas, and to the addition of a multitude of different concerns (water

quality, biological and ecosystem diversity, landscapes, coastlines….) that cannot be treated independently. An old tradition of free access to the shore, either on the tidal zone or on the maritime side will certainly not favour the development of a culture of integrated coastal management. The politico-administrative tradition of France, very centralised and technocratic, is probably more qualified to design and enforce laws than to initiate a public debate and build such a culture.

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