

Mediation to manage a local dispute around the landfill site at Góra Kalwaria near Warsaw in Poland.

Summary

Following public opposition to a planned landfill site in Góra Kalwaria, a mediator enabled dialogue to be restored between the parties, although the conflict was not definitively resolved.

Key words

conflict, mediation, participation by inhabitants

Context

Góra Kalwaria is a small town (12,000 inhabitants) in Mazowie, Poland. The former landfill site, 'Lubna 1', was created in 1978 to receive household waste from Warsaw. It was poorly managed, however, and modernisation work began in 1997. But the project gave rise to violent opposition from local people who had health and environmental concerns, and who considered that the commune had not redistributed the economic benefits of the former landfill site among the surrounding villages.

Partners

The Lubna 2 consortium (Solucom, the towns of Góra Kalwaria and Warsaw) is leading the landfill site project.

- The commune of Góra Kalwaria.
- Two inhabitants' organisations are opposed to the project and dispute the involvement of local representatives.
- The mediators: Andrzej Kraszewski, professor at the Technical University of Warsaw and Paweł Moczydlowski, Institute of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw.



Activities

Alongside negotiations between regional authorities, companies and public authorities to establish the project through the 'Lubna 2' consortium, attempts were made to communicate with the population: visits to other sites, information, etc.

Despite this, public opposition gained ground and the conflict became worse due to blunders from those involved: lack of consideration towards the public, conflicts of values, conflicts between local organisations to represent the population ... The public organised a blockade of the landfill site, which resulted in seeking mediation. A volunteer mediator from the Technical University of Warsaw therefore intervened between 1998 and 2000.

The first mediation process focussed on the malfunctions of the original landfill site and was organised in the form of meetings between the stakeholders. It enabled an end to the blockage to be reached and the new project was suspended. This led to partial agreements and expert assessments aiming to clarify certain uncertainties about the impact of the project. Warsaw also agreed to look into possible new landfill sites.

The conflict however began again a few months later, when villagers considered that the project managers' commitments had not been respected. A second mediation phase began. The mediator first of all carried out individual interviews, then meetings with stakeholders. He also advised organisations so that they could better communicate their demands.

Results and prospects

When the case study was published (2004), the conflict was still underway and the project had been suspended, as Gora Kalwaria decided to remove its support for the project.

Comments

This is an example of environmental mediation in a fairly significant rural area:

- it involved a large number of inhabitants of Gora Kalwaria, one company and organisations;
- the challenge was to create a relationship between the nearby town (Warsaw) and the rural environment in terms of urban waste:
- the conflict focussed on several dimensions: health, environment, governance of public decision making, behaviour of the stakeholders, redistribution of financial compensation.