

Collaborative governance as boundary organizations

Actors' networks for improved landscape stewardship

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Background

This study uses the concept of boundary organizations (BOs) to examine if collaborative governance approaches – that were established by different governance actors for an improved landscape stewardship – display the typical characteristics of BOs. We define collaborative governance as partnerships between public, private, and civil society actors. BOs are understood as governance arrangements which create strategic bridges between actors positioned on different sides of a 'boundary' (cf. Franks, 2010; Crona & Parker, 2012).

Such a boundary often develops between actors who hold incompatible perspectives on a given issue or problem and have deviant underlying norms and values. Examples are existing boundaries along the divide in viewpoints between farmers and conservationists, government agencies and non-governmental organizations, scientists and policy makers, or land managers and land planners. For this study we were specifically interested in the boundary that exists between actors, such as farmers or fishermen, who are primarily interested in producing provisioning ecosystem services ('food') and actors, such as environmental agencies or nature protection organizations, who are primarily interested in preserving regulating (e.g. water regulation), cultural (e.g. landscape aesthetics), or habitat ecosystem services (biodiversity) in agricultural landscapes.

Research question

Typical characteristics of BOs refer to a number of structural as well as procedural features (Figure 2, cf. Guston, 1999; Franks, 2010):

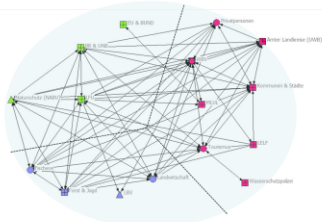


Figure 2: Structural and procedural features of boundary organizations

Against this backdrop, we address the following research question: *Do collaborative governance approaches for improved landscape stewardship show the mentioned structural and procedural features and therefore qualify as BOs?*

Data & Methods

The analysis was based on empirical research on two collaborative governance approaches in the Biosphere reserve Spreewald: a citizen foundation and a water management board. For data collection and analysis we used social network analysis (Net Map tool based on personal interviews with governance actors (cf. Schiffer & Hauck, 2010).



Colors indicate actors main interest in: green = nature conservation, blue = food production, purple = mixed interests. Shapes indicate different actor types: squares = civil society, squares = public, circles = private actors. Lines – indicate info. exchange between actors through information exchange – indicate knowledge due to different interests.

Figure 1: Water management board 'Übergrenzwald'. The network of actors on both sides of the producing food vs. nature conservation boundary' creating a space to engage into dialogue.

Results

Both governance arrangements displayed at least some of the structural and procedural features typical for BOs. The approaches allowed actors situated on the different sides of the 'producing food vs. conserving nature boundary' to negotiate common goals in favor of improved ecosystem service provision. This was possible because actors' interests, besides self-regarding interests, also included other-regarding interests. These included preserving the traditional landscape as part of their mutual cultural heritage, furthering social capital within the network, or protecting local biodiversity (see Figure 3 below). Each actor contributed specific knowledge and resources and only through the pooling of both they were able to address problematic issues at landscape scale, which they could not address individually. Both approaches helped to open up a space for actors to engage into dialogue and deliberate different viewpoints while ensuring that actors could remain within their original professional boundaries (see Figure 1 above). However, tensions between actors never dissolve entirely, and active 'boundary management' is needed to maintain a productive relation among actors, e.g. through continuous communication and effective mediation in case of conflicts.

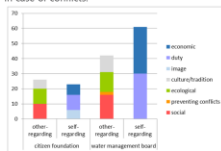


Figure 3: Aggregation of actors' interests into self- and other-regarding interests: Water management board 'Übergrenzwald' and citizen foundation 'Kulturlandschaft Spreewald'

References

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 Civil public-private partnerships (cp3): Collaborative governance approaches for policy innovation to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services delivery in agricultural landscapes.

