



Forms of collaboration and social fit in wildlife management: A comparison of policy networks in Alaska

Chanda L. Meek^{*}

Regional Resilience and Adaptation Program, PO Box 757000, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK 99775-7000, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 July 2011

Received in revised form 21 July 2012

Accepted 5 October 2012

Available online 2 November 2012

Keywords:

Policy network

Social fit

Social network analysis

Institution

Congruence

Subsistence

Arctic change

ABSTRACT

Rapid environmental change in the Arctic has led to calls for new forms of environmental governance that consciously fit policy solutions to both the policy problem as well as the underlying social–ecological system dynamics. While efforts to evaluate the ecological fit of institutions to place have become more sophisticated, efforts to measure the social fit of policy remains underdeveloped. In order to examine the effect of institutional form on policy processes and socially relevant outcomes, I employ a mixed methods approach including ethnographic data and social network analysis to compare the implementation of two international wildlife regimes in two indigenous Iñupiaq towns in Alaska. My results yield three findings: (1) that separate institutions create differently structured policy networks, (2) differences in network structures and levels of power-sharing correlate with perceptions of policy, and (3) networks that reflect local social patterns are more likely to be considered fair and inclusive. These findings support congruence theory, which posits that public policy reflective of local constructions of legitimacy will achieve greater success than policy that is not reflective.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Unprecedented, rapid ecological change in the Arctic has inspired calls for new modes of environmental governance focused on reflexive and adaptive strategies to foster resilience of key ecosystem services under significant uncertainties (Chapin et al., 2009). Many of these strategies will necessarily cross ecological scales and jurisdictional boundaries in order to reflect underlying dynamics of the complex systems involved (Young, 2002). Regardless of form, successful policies shape the management of living marine resources through structuring human behavior in a way that is responsive to social and ecological drivers of population dynamics (Anderies et al., 2004). With these goals in mind, a current mode of research in institutional analysis examines how well institutions “fit” ecological dynamics (Folke et al., 1998; Young, 2002; Galaz et al., 2008); other works have examined the fit between institutions and social dynamics (Ebbin, 2002; McCay, 2002; Olsson et al., 2007). However, few if any have tried to develop an empirical measure for the goodness-of-fit of policy to local social environments. Avoiding a mismatch is especially important in international environmental policy,

where those who design policy interventions are rarely the same actors who will implement it or be governed by its provisions. Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of understanding and shaping human–environmental interactions in order to sustain resources, wildlife management policy often focuses on the ecological dynamics, assuming that persuasion, scientific data, and outreach will encourage compliance to government rules.

This study offers evidence that designing international law that can adapt to local social as well as ecological circumstances can help to sustain local collective action and increase local buy-in to international and national wildlife policy. In this paper, I describe and compare two different institutions for reporting subsistence harvests of marine mammals. The first institution implements United States obligations under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling and is considered very successful in achieving 98–100% reporting of harvests (IWC, 2008). The second institution implements United States obligations under the Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears, and has historically seen a more variable rate of reporting depending on the community involved (USFWS, 2008). This difference in rates of reporting is interesting because both institutions have been in place for over 20 years, are implemented in many of the same villages, most with populations under 500 people, and often involve the same families. The institutions differ in that they are implemented by two separate national wildlife agencies and represent different co-management strategies. The result sets the

^{*} Present address: Department of Political Science, PO Box 756420, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6420, USA. Tel.: +1 907 474 5115; fax: +1 907 474 7244.

E-mail address: clmeek@alaska.edu.

stage for a rich comparison of institutional form and its effects on wildlife policy success.

This study compares *formal networks*, those connections between policy actors established in national rules in force, to *informal networks*, those connections between policy actors that are self-organized in response to particular issues in order to solve problems. The closer the formal and the informal network resemble each other, I argue, the better the social fit between national rules and community social dynamics. As a result of increased social fit, congruence theory hypothesizes that fit should support more effective policy implementation, especially in terms of legitimacy and buy-in.

The paper begins with a short review of literature related to collaboration and social fit in environmental policy in Section 2. The third section reviews social and policy networks as analytical tools and introduces the analytical design. Based on the literature review, I create propositions linking the structure of policy networks and their effect on perceptions of policy fairness, inclusiveness and effectiveness. Section 4 details methods of data collection and analysis, followed by Section 5 with a focus on results. Section 6 evaluates each proposition and is followed by a conclusion in Section 7.

2. Collaborative governance and conceptions of social fit

2.1. Social fit and co-management strategies

Although ecological fit has arguably always been a goal of contemporary environmental policymaking, the importance of “social fit” is a relatively newer idea growing out of development studies in postcolonial societies. Social fit, or the match between social processes, cultural practices and policy prescriptions, is informed by the construction of new, more democratic and responsive policies as a promise to respect international human rights as well as an acknowledgement of the limitations of state power. The concept of social fit assumes that policy can be effective in the short term, and perhaps even more responsive to change, if it is (1) legitimate to those who are to be governed, and (2) incorporates local knowledge of the context in which policy is to be implemented. In studies of resource management, a spectrum of participatory policy designs reflect these two assumptions: cooperative approaches in which communities share responsibility for policy but do not often have authority to shape the approach, co-management where power is shared between communities and the government and devolution, in which states cede power to a community to implement state policy. Each of these policy designs reflects different strategies of state-community relations that differ on the extent to which power is shared but also the ways in which the organizations are related (e.g., through laws establishing collaboration or through voluntary action, etc.). Carlsson and Berkes (2005) use the term, “co-management” to refer to all three strategies, distinguishing between co-management as joint organization (low power-sharing but with retained autonomy) and co-management as a state-nested system (high power-sharing but with one entity potentially possessing more authority than the other). These two strategies, which are compared in this study, are illustrated in Fig. 1.

Finally, Carlsson and Berkes (2005) note that features of these strategies can be combined into different configurations as well. There is no universal fit for communities and co-management strategies, as the form and function of co-management can be quite different depending on who is involved and what it is that they are co-managing. The extent of power sharing may affect the extent to which communities “buy-in” to the process, however. Many resource management scholars have demonstrated linkages between co-management approaches in which user organizations

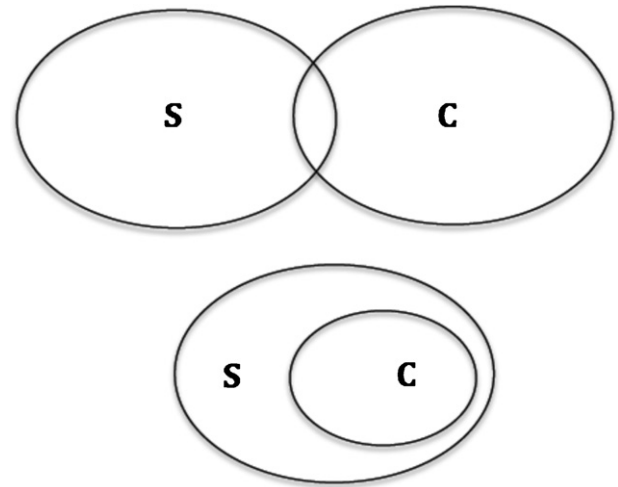


Fig. 1. Resource co-management as a system of state-community relations. The top figure represents co-management as a joint organization between the state and the community, and the bottom figure represents co-management as a nested system in which the state holds legal authority but the community manages resources (as in Carlsson and Berkes, 2005).

or representatives are part of the decision-making to support for and participation in the policy-making process (Pinkerton, 2003; Berkes et al., 1991; Singleton, 1998). A “nested” institution in which key local policy actors are linked to higher-order decision-makers would reflect this design. Tyler (1990) and others have demonstrated that stakeholder buy-in and belief that the policy-making process is fair, leads to greater legitimacy, and, ultimately better congruence between *rules in force* (i.e., what the law requires) and *rules in use* (i.e., what people do). Collaborative processes characterized by low amounts of power sharing may not be robust enough to enforce particular contentious rules such as quotas (Hauck, 2008). An institution reflecting this approach could have many interconnected partners across scales, but limited capacity for conflict resolution. To add complexity, many communities with longstanding use and occupancy of a place will have indigenous institutions embedded in local village governance, reflected in indigenous language and cultural practices in addition to any international, national, state and/or regional rules. Co-management often aims to bring these rule sets closer, either through harmonization, persuasion, or sometimes coercion (Nadasdy, 2003).

Where domestic or international authorities apply new rules to a resource that already has other local or institutional legacies attached to it, local communities often resist (Scott, 1985; Spaeder, 2005). In this situation, some communities have argued for devolution, the transfer of legal authority from the federal to the state or local level, so that the local community gains control of the policy implementation process. Importantly, devolution often requires the deliberate deconstruction of state power; studies of *partial* devolution have often shown ambiguous results, with failure stemming from factors such as poor leadership, local elite capture, and inadequate funding (Cousins and Kepe, 2005).

Devolution as a policy strategy arguably allows for the development of local implementation capacity as well as the fostering of local norms relating to the social goal of the policy in focus. Devolution may not succeed in furthering governmental agencies' goals, however, if the rules are not salient or they contradict local understandings. On the other hand, skeptics may follow rules regardless of how they feel about them, because they are involved in other social relationships (e.g., friendship, peer relations, etc.) that affect the development of norms and trust within the group (Ostrom, 2010; Jagers et al., 2012).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10504983>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10504983>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)