



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Forest Policy and Economics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/forpol

Network governance in national Swiss forest policy: Balancing effectiveness and legitimacy

Tobias Schulz^{a,*}, Eva Lieberherr^b, Astrid Zabel^c

^a Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow, and Landscape Research WSL, Economics and Social Science Unit, Research Group Environmental and Resource Economics, Zürcherstrasse 111, 8903 Birmensdorf, Switzerland

^b ETH Zurich, Institute for Environmental Decisions, Research Group Natural Resource Policy, CHN J74.1, Universitätsstrasse 16, 8092 Zürich, Switzerland

^c Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest, and Food Sciences HAFL, Research Group for International Forest Management and Climate Change, Länggasse 85, 3052 Zollikofen, Switzerland

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 February 2016

Received in revised form 20 October 2016

Accepted 27 October 2016

Available online xxxxx

Keywords:

National forest program

Stakeholder participation

State-centered policy networks

Stakeholder analysis

Social network analysis

ABSTRACT

Network governance may strike a balance between democratic participation (input-legitimacy) and efficiency and effectiveness (output-legitimacy) of policy processes and thus can enhance the acceptance of policy reforms. This article aims at an appraisal of network governance in Swiss forest policy by uncovering its current structure and by describing the experiences in terms of legitimacy and concerning how this is perceived by the actors involved. Although network governance is common in Switzerland, as an early coordination of stakeholders is required due to strong veto points later in the political process, more progressive participatory procedures have recently been introduced to these networks. Based on expert interviews and a social network analysis derived from an online survey, we confirm that the core of the Swiss forest policy network includes only a handful of actors. These actors are relatively satisfied with the current approach and some of them decline a further strengthening of participatory elements. Particularly the forest economic as well as the actors representing the sub-national jurisdictions (cantons) are well connected with other actors from forest industry, but still they perceive their influence as not being adequate. The environmental NGOs, in contrast, judge their influence more positively, albeit they coordinate mostly with each other and with the national administration. Although the networks do not engage legislative actors very closely at the time of analysis, probably because forest policy reform has already settled the more fundamental questions, the forest policy network nonetheless seems well embedded in the democratic process.

© 2016 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In many European countries, National Forest Programs (NFP) have been developed during the last decades. They were inspired by initiatives at the international level (Howlett and Rayner, 2006) and initiated in parallel or even in advance to other cross-cutting environmental policy programs, such as national strategies for biodiversity protection and sustainability transitions, which are currently evolving in many countries (Prip et al., 2010). Such large political programs and planning attempts—and particularly their coordination—cannot be designed and implemented only in a top-down manner by one single public agency. In contrast, these national policy processes have been seen as a chance to establish new modes of governance that foster consensus-seeking processes and enhance the coordination between sectors of

administrations and different stakeholders in forest policy (Schanz, 2002) and thus respond to the increased demand for policy integration and an improved inclusion of citizens and civil societal actors in forest policy making and planning (DeWitt, 2004; Evans, 2012; Fischer, 2006; Fischer, 2012; Kleinschmit et al., 2009; Meadowcroft, 2004).

The emergence of such new modes of governance can be framed as potentially clashing with existing, more hierarchical modes of coordination and democratic legitimization or as being purely instrumental in supporting administrators and politicians in their domination of the process (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007). Following from the latter, the underlying policy networks may not challenge regulatory authority of the state (Pierre, 2000; Treib et al., 2007). More progressively, however, institutional arrangements to coordinate networks beyond the conventional set of actors for policy making may complement existing venues and institutions or even initiate their transition towards decentralized production of legitimacy and participation (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007; Newig and Kvarda, 2012). In contrast to legitimacy based on representative democracy, which underpins hierarchical government, new

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: tobias.schulz@wsl.ch (T. Schulz), eva.lieberherr@usys.ethz.ch (E. Lieberherr), astrid.zabel@bfh.ch (A. Zabel).

governance modes may be more strongly linked with *deliberative democracy* in terms of “free, open and public debate (or dialogue)” (Heinelt, 2002, p. 24) where all affected actors should have a right to participate (Schmitter, 2002). For the emerging NFP processes addressed above, the intention is that new network modes of governance will actually complement existing institutions positively, i.e. in terms of increased participation (Glück et al., 2005; Hysing, 2009) providing a form of coordination in networks of actors from different organizations, which more accurately reflects the complexity of the regulatory problem.

The empirical evidence so far calls for a more differentiated perspective on these developments in forest policy. In their appraisal of the British Columbia Great Bear Rainforest initiative, which resulted in new policy networks and less hierarchical modes of political decision-making, Howlett et al. (2009) deny a transition towards an entirely new mode of governance, as the government managed to introduce more formal control instruments. Similarly, from their examination of the German case, Winkel and Sotirov (2015) conclude that new governance approaches and the corresponding attempts to enhance policy coordination with NFPs were not able to break up clientelistic neo-corporatist decision-making structures and to effectively support the participation of environmental and nature protection interests. In a historical analysis of Swedish national forest policy from 1850 until 2005, Hysing (2009) found that state actors have maintained their “position at the center of governing” (p. 666) despite non-governmental forums and soft policy instruments.

In Switzerland, an NFP was initiated around the year 2000, as the need for more profound reforms was apparent because the national forest law had been revised only once (in 1993) since 1912. The Swiss NFP nonetheless remained an initiative of the forest administration (as a part of the Federal Office for the Environment) and thus at a relatively low political level as it was neither initiated nor later endorsed by the government (Bisang and Zimmermann, 2006; Zimmermann, 2011). It rather should be qualified as an experiment that, however, was explicitly and carefully designed as a broad participatory process. Although it resulted in some new coordination fora, in terms of immediate concrete political outcomes, the endeavor was rather disappointing, since in 2005 the parliament refused deliberation on the bill that had been formulated based on the NFP (Hirschi et al., 2012).

In the meantime the government has endorsed a simplified and thematically enhanced strategy document “Forest Policy 2020” (BAFU, 2013) and forest policy reform has gained momentum. While the first successful Swiss Forest Law revision after 2005 was initiated, prepared (and finally adopted) by parliament in 2012 (Hirschi et al., 2012), the administration just very recently succeeded in getting a revision proposal approved by parliament (Zabel and Lieberherr, 2016).

These revision proposals are negotiated and prepared in rather small policy networks, as they are typical for many sectoral policies in Switzerland. Such coordination in small networks at a very early phase of a policy revision process is the traditional mode of governance in Switzerland, which owes its structure to some extent also to the powerful direct democratic elements, such as the referendum, that may be triggered against a decision of parliament at the end of the political decision-making process. While in forest policy stronger coordination had also been initiated by the NFP process itself, such coordination is currently also induced by additional attempts to introduce new and more open participatory venues that come as a result of the negotiation of policy strategies in neighboring and new policy sectors, such as biodiversity.

We thus observe an attempt to introduce increased participatory means, i.e. the deliberation of policy proposals among a broader audience of potentially affected citizens in Swiss forest policy. However, it still remains somewhat unclear how early policy coordination in policy networks actually works in Swiss forest policy and how this relates to democratic legitimacy in terms of participation. With this paper, we thus aim at addressing the following questions: How is network

governance structured in Swiss forest policy, and what are the experiences with respect to its legitimacy and concerning how it is perceived by those involved.

Based on expert interviews, we list the most important (collective) actors and fora or venues in which different forms and degrees of participatory coordination are practiced. While most of them are an integral part of the standard political process in Switzerland, some of them are rather new and have evolved out of the need for more participation. Drawing on social network analysis (SNA), we show that only a handful of actors occupy the core of the policy networks. We can confirm that most actors involved in forest policy making in Switzerland usually have had positive experiences with this more narrow “neocorporatist” way of interest coordination. Some of them are skeptical about strengthening participatory elements, as it has been done for neighboring and cross-cutting new policy domains that are currently under elaboration, such as the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

2. New modes of governance in forest policy: placebo or panacea?

The network governance concept is an analytical perspective that tries to grasp coordination between actors in the policy process (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2016). Drawing on research about political power in policy networks (Jordan, 1990; Kaufmann et al., 1986; Rhodes, 1988) and about managing networks (Kooiman, 1993; Marin and Mayntz, 1991; Scharpf, 1978) from public administration theory, Glück et al. (2005) suggest policy networks as a concept which particularly helps to better understand recent changes and innovations in forest policy-making procedures.

According to Sørensen and Torfing (2005), network governance¹ can be defined as a mode of coordination between “interdependent but relatively autonomous actors” that rather stand in horizontal than vertical (hierarchical) relation, interact through negotiations and form an institutionalized community that “contributes to political steering” and is self-regulating “within the limits of political authorities”. The state does thus not necessarily give up its rule-setting authority, if it initiates or supports such networks in order to find steering mechanisms better equipped for addressing impending challenges (Pierre, 2000; Pierre and Peters, 2000). Usually such policy networks remain relatively state centric, while including a diverse range of actors (Kooiman, 2003; Rhodes, 2007). This is not any different for forest policy: based on empirical evidence on policy networks for sustainable forest management in North America, Cashore and Vertinsky (2000) conclude that newly introduced modes of governance can best be understood as gradual transformations of policy networks that already existed to some extent before the attempts to introduce new governance modes. Accordingly, Arts (2014) suggests an interpretation of the forest governance concept that rather implies a transformation than a retreat of the state.

From the perspective of governments and administrations, success of coordination in such policy networks may be defined in rather instrumental terms (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). On the one hand, they should convince individuals and organizations of the value or the expected outcomes of the policy and thus prevent them from using veto power or engaging in opposition. On the other hand, coordination in policy networks responds to increased complexity of the policy system by incorporating expertise from various stakeholders and by cooperating with them in implementation tasks. The latter is particularly the case for environmental and nature protection as well as resource

¹ We refer to the network governance approach here and refrain from applying the “multilevel governance” concept. Originating from research on EU integration and the establishment of new levels of government (Fairbrass and Jordan, 2004), the multilevel governance approach is more recently also applied to complex environmental governance problems that require political coordination across different scales (Newig and Fritsch, 2009). As long as an analysis does not put emphasis on coordination across different levels of state organization, however, we do not think that the multilevel governance approach offers an advantage over the network governance approach.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6544791>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6544791>

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