**Governance Matters**


**1. Introduction to our approach and rationale. Three conceptual lenses. Empirical generalizations from other case study based research.**


As the project title, "Governance Models for Sustainability, Resilience and Social Innovation at the Landscape Scale" suggests, governance issues underlay our enquiry about how people associated with biosphere reserves and model forests/forest community programs can effectively steer their way towards desirable forms of sustainability in the complex systems within which they are embedded. They can become admirably organized locally to attempt this for their chosen landscape, but they also have to rely upon cooperation from a larger array of institutions that also exist there, and are subject to the effects of institutions at larger scales.  We would like to understand better the factors that appear to be associated with their successes, or lack of them, by examining the experience in case studies from some of the 30 or so examples of the two kinds of landscape programs across Canada.

We necessarily bring to this task some "conceptual frameworks" (or "interpretive lenses") to help discern key factors in the case study situations. These pertain to the inherent complexity of the social-ecological systems that structure the regional context of each case; what is being sought locally as desirable forms of enhanced sustainability; and how questions about resilience, adaptability, and social innovation are being dealt with. The latter are assumed necessary for successful transitions towards, or actual social transformations for sustainability in response to the inherent dynamics of complex systems and the dynamics of broadly unsustainable modern socio-economic behaviour.

Our enquiry about governance distinguishes two levels to analyze. The first level is that of the "governance framework" adopted by the convener organizations on-the-ground to carry out their own program initiatives for enhancing desirable forms of sustainability in the region. The second much larger level is the "governance regime" comprised of governments, corporations/businesses, and the "civil society" of other non-governmental organizations and community groups. The term "regime" is used here to focus mainly on the rule systems that are in use by these institutions to direct what gets done, by whom,

and how, in order to formulate and implement policies for different domains that constitute the political economy and resource base of the landscape regions. The space to be explored in more detail is how the governance framework fits in and relates to the governance regime in which it is situated.

There is an enormous literature on the meanings of "governance" and on the changing relationships among the state, market, and civil society modes of governance that have developed over the past four decades or so under the rubric of neo-liberal economic doctrines and neo-conservative political ideologies. The literature also addresses civil society pressures for more transparency in government, more openings for public participation, and expansion of policy making to include civil society. Neo-liberal policies and their consequences served to strengthen the scale and global reach of corporate capitalism with a corresponding readjustment in the relative role of nation-states compared to the private sector and community-based reactions to these changes. It is in this context that fundamental issues of "sustainability" and governance have come into an urgent prominence. This volume of literature is not reviewed here.

Rather, the landscape scale cases we examine are not nearly as expansive as the issues raised by these global changes, but they are affected by these changes. We sought a "conceptual framework" that would encompass the scope of global change so it could be drawn upon to examine its influences at the smaller geographic and space-time scales associated with our case examples. We have drawn upon four inter-related conceptual lenses within this wider framework to help guide our enquiry. A recent review of the main approaches taken to studies of policy processes (Nowlin 2011) helped with this selection.

## Conceptual Lenses for Enquiries into Governance for Model Forests and Biosphere Reserves

### 1. Actor Coalition Framework (ACF)

The ACF was developed over a number of years by Paul A. Sabatier and his colleagues at the University of California (Sabatier 1988). At the time, they were addressing what they saw as limitations to the conventional four stage policy sequence: problem

definitions, policy formulation, implementation strategies, and evaluation of outcomes, with each step usually undertaken by a different mix of agencies and professions that became associated with each step of the process. To their credit, they also modified their ACF based on their own and other people's case studies that applied it to a wide array of different situations. They started initially with six examples (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1994), followed by 18 examples (Sabatier 1998), and more recently 80 examples, including some of the earlier ones (Weible and others (2009). Their goal is to refine what are now 15 hypotheses posed as testable statements in order to develop strong theory. They also provide guidelines for anyone doing a case study to encourage them to use appropriate methodology so that their observations can be used for this goal (see also Sabatier and Weible 2007).

In brief, long lasting policy communities form within given policy domains to promote their preferred solutions to recurring issues that arise in the domain. The coalitions are formed by people from a number of different kinds of agencies, organizations and community groups who share fundamental ontological and normative beliefs about the world in general that give rise to similar perceptions of issues, problems and strategies to solve them in any particular policy field. Learning from experience may alter some "secondary" or relatively superficial aspects of the issues to be addressed, but not the deep beliefs that underlie the worldviews of coalition members. The learning that does happen might come from episodic "deep shocks" to the system in which their policy domain exists or from recognition that other external circumstances have changed to such an extent that the policy issues as they defined them are no longer pertinent. Generally, more than one advocacy coalition will be active in a policy field at any given time.

There are divergent views about different aspects of the ACF. The basic ACF concept has been discerned in a wide range of case studies, but not always in the form described by Sabatier. Context can make a considerable difference. The main criticism is that governance-through-networks can be much more pragmatic and opportunistic, with changes in tactics being reactions to immediate circumstances rather than deep shared beliefs about the world. However, hegemonic actor coalitions have often been deeply embedded for decades to the point they are just accepted as the way the world

is. ACF versions that are consistent with the policy modernization phenomena provide examples.

More recently, Jones and Jenkins-Smith (2009) addressed the role of public opinion in ACFs. They note that the importance of this in many contexts has been acknowledged to the extent it is now considered to be foundational and can become external constraints and/or a source of internal shocks to a given ACF as well as a resource for competing ACFs. Joachin and May (2010) draw attention to "boundary-spanning policy regimes" especially in the context of complexity where the myopia of small policy sub-systems and the resulting fragmentation of understanding is itself a major source of dysfunctional governance. A resulting "crisis-driven emergence" of new configurations is based on some quite different convergences of issues, ideas, interests, and institutions.


2. Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IADF)

The IADF has been developed and tested through many case studies by Elinor Ostrom and colleagues at Indiana University over the past three decades or so. In 2009 she shared a Nobel Prize in economics for this work. The original challenge was to understand how communities throughout the world had been able to organize locally to maintain "common-pool" resources essential for their individual and collective livelihoods. They had also to do this in environments full of uncertainties and vulnerabilities, something that has since resonated more widely in the modern world. Many of these older systems have been destroyed by "development".

Based on the extensive range of case examples, the IADF has articulated eight "design principles" for successful management of "common pool (property) resources" (CPRs). As summarized by Koontz (2003) the principles are:

- Clearly defined boundaries
- Rules congruent with local conditions
- Individuals affected can participate in modifying operational rules
- Monitors are accountable to the appropriators who in turn are committed to following the agreed operating rules
- Graduated sanctions against violators

- Ready access to conflict-resolution mechanisms
- Recognition of rights to organize, by external government authorities
- Nested enterprises, where the resource is part of a larger system

The principles apply to an "action arena" defined by the larger context it is in including attributes of the physical world; attributes of the community within which actors are embedded; rules that create incentives and constraints for certain actions (these include three levels of rules – the operational, the collective choice, and constitutional rules at the largest scale beyond the action arenas); and the interactions among the members of the CPR community.

Ostrom (2007) reviewed the academic/intellectual challenges over the last half century (in the USA) that helped shape the IADF. They were the "public choice" alternatives to centralized government and market capitalism; the "tragedy of the commons" debate that denied people would be anything other than ruthlessly selfish; the "new institutional economics" that acknowledges the relevance of organizational contexts and human behaviours; and behavioral game theory modeling. Cox and others (2010) reviewed 91 studies of CPRs (including 77 case studies) and concluded that the eight design principles hold up well but suggested minor modifications in the wording of three of them.

The most recent work has explored possibilities of linking the IAD concepts with social-ecological systems (SES) developed mainly by ecologists associated with the Resilience Alliance network. This has led to expanding the original "biophysical conditions" as an external variable in the IAD to an internalized set of "resource systems" (type) and "resource units" (e.g. in situ or mobile) linked to the "action situations" (actors and their various interactions). SES also raises issues of multiple scales and levels within scales in which both ecological and societal interactions occur. This in turn opens up issues of "polycentric governance" and network relationships (Andersson and Ostrom 2008; Ostrom 2009; 2011). Polycentric systems of governance raise questions about how the dynamics of action situations, especially in closely related policy, could interact or otherwise impact on each other (McGinnis 2011).

### 3. Political Modernization and Policy Arrangements.

This conceptual framework has been developed by Bas Arts with other colleagues at Wageningen University in The Netherlands (Arts and others 2006; Arnouts and Arts 2009). "Political modernization" sets the larger context. This refers to changes brought about by neo-liberal globalization processes over the last four decades or so. These changed the structures and roles of governments in nation-states as well as their relations with private sector organizations and with civil society (no longer equated with the State itself as was traditional in some countries). The result has been multiple "actors" (a generic term referring to many types of organizations or key people in them) in governance relationships at each level of jurisdiction (global, national, provincial, local) that created differentiation at similar levels referred to as "horizontal governance" as well as multi-level configurations viewed as "vertical governance".

The process of political modernization has gone through three recognized stages. The "early modernization" relied upon rational planning and science as justifications for policy objectives of the State. Skepticism or outright opposition to these State doctrines about science-based rationality and to State-Market coalitions led to an "anti-modernization" stage with protests in many countries. The current "late modernization" stage subscribes to the risk society sense of pervasive vulnerabilities and a need to interweave three modes of governance represented by the State, the Market, and Civil Society.

The constitutional structure of different countries influenced how these stages unfolded. There are differences among, for example, the liberal-pluralism of the United States, the neo-corporatist elitism of some smaller European countries, and the "Statist" central command structures of others. There are no clear paths or gradual transitions in the sequence of the different stages among different countries, but there are a number of "hybrid" variations and juxtapositions, especially among different policy arrangements. Altogether these phenomena can be viewed as continuing trends in political modernization, but also as "instruments" that affect governance configurations in any given situation (Arts and Leroy 2006; Arts and others 2006).

"Policy arrangements" evolve for different "domains of interest" as defined by the actors in them. They usually appear in each of the formal socio-economic sectors or sub-

sectors, and they too are molded by the constitutional structure of a given country. As the shift from government to governance occurs, new roles in policy formation are provided for civil society, a diffusion of political power from the State goes to the private sector and to lower sub-national jurisdictions, legal formal structures become somewhat less important, and new discourses start up on issues of "steering" policy and governing. While there has been a long history of private trading organizations and religious organizations in the public policy domain, more recent developments have expanded it to include a greater diversity of players and forms of interactions applied to somewhat different issues.

The arrangements have four main components: actors and coalitions of them; the power and resources that differentiate among coalitions or some actors in them; on-going policy discourses that describe and justify what the actors and coalitions are striving to do; and the actual rule systems in use that are often linked directly with components of the governance regime. These four "dimensions" are viewed as an interactive set. Changes occurring within, or external to one, or initiated by it will likely induce changes in the others. This interactive set largely determines policy outcomes for the domains. The processes are continual with various interludes of (temporary) stabilization for the context and organization of the domain.

This depiction is also generally consistent with the social structuration concept to resolve the actor-structure problematique (e.g. Giddens 1984), phase cycle dynamics in social ecological systems (e.g. Gunderson and Holling 2002) and dialectical processes of self-organization and emergence (e.g. Fuchs and Hufkirchner, 2005). Arts and Buizer (2009) suggest that perspectives from discourse theory may be of special interest. "Discourse" may be interpreted as communications, texts, frames, and social practices. The latter two, when conjoined with institutions, pose a discourse-social practice problematique analogous to the actor-structure duality. Together they frame new interpretive discourses to give meaning and direction to new actor coalitions. Examples cited were the discussions about a global forestry regime from the late 1980s that brought to the forefront concerns about biodiversity, sustainability and governance that have partly replaced the previous exclusive concerns about fibre production and international trade in forest products.

Arts and Goverde (2006) developed a "Governance Capacity Approach" (GCA) that could be used for "reflective evaluation" of both the potential and the actual performance of political modernization and policy arrangements in terms of their outcomes and with reference to criteria for "good governance". GCA strives for an integration of juridical, economic, and political contexts (the "JEP triangle") to examine the congruence in terms of strategies followed by policy actors, the coherence of the four dimensions of a given policy arrangement, and the "structural-external" congruence of the policy arrangement embedded in a wider institutional context.

Applications of the policy arrangements framework to SESs raised contested interpretations of issues about scales and levels in ecological and social systems. Ecologists engaged in "hierarchy theory" tend to view their interpretations of nested scales and their different metrics to describe them as depictions of a basic biophysical reality. Social scientists, especially some who have engaged in debates about "regionalism", are much more inclined to see different perspectives as social constructs that involve sense-making about concepts such as territories, places, scales and networks viewed largely as a mutually interacting set of components in flux.

At the extreme, this division between "critical realists" and "social constructivists" poses irresolvable contradictions for any governance process that may be expected to resolve them. However, attempts are being made to resolve this conceptual dualism by adopting "landscape" as a bridging concept given its cultural origins as a term for artistic depictions of environments (Görg 2007); thinking in terms of "phase-space" as a focus on past processes that can be discerned in contemporary landscapes (Jones 2009); specifying underlying research issues more clearly (Tammer and others 2010); or engaging in reflexive dialogue (e.g. Buizer and others 2011). It can be noted in passing that methods developed by the Resilience Alliance to understand SESs include reconstructing the history of any particular SES in as much detail as possible to identify both natural and human disturbances, some of which led to major changes in the SES in earlier years (e.g. Walker and Salt 2006; Resilience Alliance 2010).

## 4. Empirical Generalizations from Various Case and/or Research Studies

### a) Governing through networks

Collaborative governance implies networks of actors and processes that allow people (mostly in organizations) to participate effectively in policy preparation and implementation. Reed (2008) reviewed literature on participation, partly in response to some disillusionment with claims about the value and benefits from engaging large numbers of "stakeholders" in collaborative processes. He concluded that the move away from a "tool-kit" approach to participation that emphasized techniques to elicit desired responses from participants, to participation viewed as a process (using a "service contract" metaphor) was quite appropriate. But there were best practices guidelines to recognize:

> "…stakeholder participation needs to be underpinned by a philosophy that emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust and learning. Where relevant, participation should be considered as early as possible and throughout the process, representing relevant stakeholders systematically. The process needs to have clear objectives from the outset, and should not overlook the need for highly skilled facilitation. Local and scientific knowledge can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex and dynamic natural systems and processes. Such knowledge can also be used to evaluate the appropriateness of potential technical and local solutions to environmental problems. Finally, … to overcome many of its limitations, stakeholder participation must be institutionalized, creating organizational cultures that can facilitate processes where goals are negotiated and outcomes are necessarily uncertain. In this light, participatory processes may seem very risky, but there is growing evidence that if well designed, these perceived risks may be well worth taking". (*ibid*: 2426).

Participation also has to have means and incentives for social learning built into it. This implies some balance between strong and weak ties among actors in the network. Strong ties, usually among people with similar characteristics ("homophily") can distribute information and tacit knowledge quickly but may also exhibit "group think" on many issues, and exclude non-members. Weak network ties, usually among quite different people who are in different networks ("multiplexity") allows for bridging over longer distances in a network and for access to much wider information sources while also being much more flexible. Deliberation processes, however, are easier among people with strong ties, and no more than about 8-15 participants. Network structures are also important (Newig and others 2010).

Networks are usually considered in terms of their "size" (number of participants), "density" (the number of links among individuals and/or nodes in the network), and "centralization" (how concentrated or distributed the links are among one or more major nodes in the network). These structures affect information flows through the network and the ease in reaching consensus on values and goals. But this also depends on the topics under discussion and whether or not participants are limited in what they can agree upon by the organizations they represent, Insofar as the deliberations are effectively negotiations, it matters that some topics are simply non-negotiable, though some non-negotiable topics may be open to re-formulation (typically by broadening or narrowing their scope) to become negotiable.

There is considerable debate about the kinds of learning that happens in networked governance and the kinds of factors that determine if, who, how, when, and what type of learning occurs  (Fazey and others 2007; Pahl-Wostl 2009; Reed and others 2010). Learning can range from "instrumental learning" for acquired task-oriented, problem-solving skills; through "communicative learning for the ability to examine and interpret meanings, intentions, values; to "social learning" including the single-loop and double-loop learning about doing things right to doing the right things; and "transformational learning" that usually means reflexive inspection of one's beliefs, intuitions, knowledge and values that can slowly lead towards changed behaviours and commitments (Armitage and others 2008). This last can also be linked to innovation and adaptive capacities for individuals and organizations.

The importance of "discourses" among members of networks and coalitions appears to be gaining more attention in the policy process literature, as noted earlier (Arts and Buizer 2009). "Narrative policy analysis" has been proposed as a method for analyzing the meanings and cultural norms that are constructed by different groups in order to either "contain" interpretations of a policy issue to the prevailing versions associated with the dominant constellation of an actor coalition or to  "expand" the interpretations as substantive critiques of the former and to propose alternatives supported by different and possibly growing constellations  (McBeth and others 2007: Jones and McBeth 2010).

*b) Becoming more sustainable – basic social theories and strategies underlying beliefs about sustainability transitions.*

There is a growing literature about transitions or transformations towards sustainability. Much of the diversity found in current writings comes from different underlying fundamental beliefs about "society" and how change actually comes about. Geels (2008) provided a succinct summary that helps identify the different and usually implicit "foundational ontologies" underlying interpretations of socio-technological strategies deemed to drive change and adaptation. They are, in abbreviated summaries:

Rational choices
- causal agents are self-interested utilitarians seeking to maximize their "utilities" (which are assumed to be fixed and given) using instrumental rationalities such as cost-benefit analysis to assess the best alternatives;
- transitions are related to new technologies (seen as external to the economy) that change the production function of firms such that everyone will have to adjust to some new equilibrium configuration for the economy;
- governments should address these market changes with new tax incentives or regulations to bring things to the new optimal conditions.

Evolution theory
- populations of agents are in competition and have "bounded rationality" about what is happening, so they have to "satisfice" since they can't "maximize";
- discontinuous change in the socio-economy comes via innovative technologies that usually lead to incremental changes;
- occasionally, mal-adaptations in the economy lead to disruptive change/crises ("creative destruction") that collapse old economic structures but can also bring new opportunities.

Structuralism
- actors share particular belief systems and symbolic representations (ideologies) that provide over-all meaning for them such that they serve as cognitive "deep structures" that act as causal agents;
- transitions occur if belief systems shift for cultural or economic reasons;

- two macro-agendas and discourses currently struggle for the future, neo-liberalism and globalization *vs* sustainable development and social transformations.

Constructivism

- "society" is nothing but continuous inter-subjective communications for sense-making and interpretation of meaning that leads to rules that people follow and thereby continuously re-create what people perceive to be "structures";
- transitions come when divergent interpretations of personal experiences are constructed and lead to modified rules and behaviours;
- sustainability is hindered by the absence of widely shared visions, but will emerge as a new social construct if it emerges at all.

Functionalism

- actors fulfill functions, tasks or roles that usually strive to maintain social structures and stability;
- in structural-functionalism change is caused by external disturbances, exhibited in complex social-ecological systems by "punctuated equilibria" (such as the ∞ cycles) that force transitions or complete transformations of what existed before;
- policy-makers should set goals but be flexible in strategies to attain them.

Conflict and power struggle

- actor coalitions are in constant conflict with other groups because of inherent contradictions in the socio-economic system that pits one set against another;
- transitions occur whenever a different coalition overthrows the incumbent one;
- sustainability (in some form) is a period of relative calm in between class, ethnic, or other struggles.

Relationism

- the identity, preferences, and interests of individual actors are fluid and entirely constituted by relations and on-going interactions which are therefore the causal agents;
- no particular views on transitions;
- sustainability would need to emphasize the local, personal and social interactions for its social construction.

Can these be linked in some way? Complete integration into some all-encompassing synthesis would be difficult because of the basic incommensurability among basic concepts/beliefs. Pragmatic combinations would have to ignore fundamental contradictions. But some odd mixes might turn up in case studies. And if all of the options are treated as considerations to recognize, aspects of each might be identified that could enrich overall understanding.

Dahle (2007) identified five different approaches or paths for transitions towards sustainability and noted whether each believed (or not) that the strategies can be carried out within the existing world order, that transition is possible now, and to what extent it would be top-down, bottom-up, or both.

Reformists

- these people are quite numerous within society, and some of them are in privileged positions where their political views may be generally consistent with a social democratic tradition;
- the transition has to take place gradually, or incrementally with an expressed concern about the future as its main rationale;
- reform has to be started right away and it could be achieved in the existing order in a peaceful and knowledgeable way with bottom-up concerns matched by some top-down acceptance of reform strategies.

Impatient revolutionaries

- change is urgent and there is no time to wait for the majority of people to realize this;
- it can't be done within the existing order, but it can (and must) be done now;
- top-down leadership by a new enlightened elite is required and may have to be imposed forcibly.

The patient revolutionaries
- there is no basis for support of what is needed and things must get worse before they can get better;
- one has to engage in long-term awareness-raising and prepare for the right moment;
- both top-down and bottom-up approaches are needed when the time comes.

Grassroot fighters
- change has to arise from below and outside of established institutions;
- there is no reason to trust revolutionary elites any more than the present power elites;
- work with new social movements at the local level, especially those building new kinds of inclusive and self-reliant communities as the basis for bottom-up expansion of influence, or replacements for a collapsed elite system.

Multifaceted Radicals
- different strategies should be followed by people at different times depending on the different contexts or circumstances they find themselves in, and as opportunities allow;
- can start organizing transitions now, but no solutions can be found in the existing order;
- both top-down and bottom-up initiatives will be needed.

People will evolve their views as they go along, based on their own experiences from involvement in one or more of these general approaches. The main choice is not so much which strategy, but between personal involvement or resignation.

*c) Steering towards sustainability in the interface "spaces" between the governance framework and the governance regime.*

This implies that local organizations seeking desirable forms of sustainability have the organizational capacities and skills to work in these arenas. Given political modernization, governance at these scales "has both thickened and become more complex…in the past several decades" (Paavola and others 2009:148) and a bottom-up perspective is more likely to capture this complexity. The main issues become ones of scale, fit and interplay among semi-autonomous yet inter-dependent actors that might co-evolve over time. "Scale" refers to the appropriate jurisdictional level in a regime. "Fit" refers to compatibility with the regime. "Interplay" is the process that seeks to match complexity of the social-ecological system to the governance dynamics in order to promote sustainability strategies. Otherwise, with multiple forces at work in multiple levels, "moments of resonance co-exist with periods of dissonance" (*ibid*:156). This is the realm where policy/institutional entrepreneurs might spot windows of opportunity to act.

Opportunities for failure of "reflective self-organization" arise in part from the different levels of network relations in the governance regime. At the local level, much may be based on interpersonal levels of trust and respect ("social capital") but in governance regimes, inter-organizational contractual relations are more common, and inter-systemic (cross-sectors and/or international) formal agreements are also present. "Met-governance" roles also come into play where the State is called upon to re-design relations among the major players to promote more balance, effectiveness, and fairness in the overall system for governance (e.g. Jessop 1999).

Under these circumstances, commitment to social transformation requires a satisficing approach based on:
- discursive construction of possible objectives of governance ("governmentality") including how or why the new objects were chosen;
- deliberate cultivation of a flexible repertoire of responses (the "law of requisite variety");
- reflexive orientation about what would be an acceptable outcome & re-assessing this regularly; and

- a romantic public "irony" to recognize a likelihood of failure but proceed as if success were possible.

The contexts within which steering towards sustainability has to occur include ambivalences about the goals of sustainability because of different values and problems of making them operational; the inherently uncertain knowledge of the complex system dynamics; the uncertainties about implications; and the limited power to shape development given the horizontal and vertical layering of the governance regime. Types of steering mechanisms can vary, depending upon assumptions about these larger contexts. They include (Voss and others 2007):

- adopt a command and control perspective that assumes full control is possible and craft rules to be followed by the State and markets;
- provide a guiding vision with statements of goals & criteria to guide self-organization to attain these;
- interpret steering as a knowledge problem recognizing that network interactions will incrementally learn and adapt as system dynamics unfold;
- assume that steering has to address a power problem so collaboration is needed among power holders in some neo-corporate arrangement *vs* more inclusiveness;
- expect the future emerge from system dynamics and various self-organizational responses to them, so try to shape interactions to encourage desirable emergence.

Application of the Conceptual Lenses

Much of the application has to be done through reviewing written materials produced by, or on behalf of the model forest and biosphere reserve programs, and by individual model forests and biosphere reserves themselves. In addition, there is a substantial literature that describes, interprets or critiques different policy-related issues that these two programs are trying to address. Questions about beliefs and motivations, and/or the specific functioning of various networks would require more detailed investigation than can be provided by these "Governance Matters" working papers.

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