



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# Regional Collaborative Environmental Governance in Practice

Examining Conditions for Successful Collaboration

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## Structure of presentation

- Defining Regional Collaborative Environmental Governance (RCG)
- Methods
- Insights from Practice - 3 Cases
- Lessons on collaboration and engaging environmental nonprofit organisations

# What is regional collaborative environmental governance?

- brings together a whole host of public, private and community actors to collaborate - pool appreciations and tangible resources, and share in decision making power to solve a set of problems
- create and govern through a “regional” jurisdiction that is appropriate to the environmental/natural resource problem
- creates and devolves authority to “regional” groups who make decisions, set goals and implement actions
- governments maintain overarching framing and decision making role through general process and/or performance requirements  
(Fung, 2004; Karkkainen, 2002; Stewart and Jones, 2003; Gray, 1989)

## Examples

- Regional Natural Resource Management (Australia)
- Regional organisations and collaboration, *Resource Management Act, Local Government Act* (New Zealand)
- Habitat Conservation Plans, *Endangered Species Act* (USA)
- open-ended environmental standards and stakeholders in decision-making processes (Europe)

## What do we make of RCG?

- Significant praise for RCG but still many questions (Head 2008; Orts & Coglianesse 2007; Paton et al 2004; Lane 2006)
- Transition is far from complete and takes many different forms
- Research agenda is still evolving (Trubek and Trubek 2007)

# Collaboration

- Under what conditions can we achieve successful collaboration?
- Unresolved questions include:
  - whether and how genuine power sharing can be achieved between government bodies?
  - the extent to which government support and incentives are needed and what forms these should take?
  - to what extent will environmental NGOs come to the table to collaborate? (Karkkainen 2006, 2008; Margerum 2007; Orts and Coglianese 2007; Head 2004,2008; Fung and Wright 2003)

## Research Methods

- Approx. 70 semi structured interviews and document analysis
- Diverse case studies
  - Regional NRM bodies in Queensland, Australia
  - 2 collaborative NRM initiatives in Canterbury, NZ
    - Collaborative Catchment Management (CCM)
    - Living Streams Program (LSP)
- “Literal” replications - 2 Regional NRM bodies, 2 CCM collaborations, 3 LSP collaborations

## Living Streams Program (LSP), Environment Canterbury, New Zealand

- Collaborative non statutory program that aims to maintain and improve the health of waterways
- 30 LSP collaborations in practice
- 10-15 collaborators (Ecan and non government stakeholders)
- 10-15 km stream, 50 km<sup>2</sup> catchment
- 10-20 dairy, cattle, crop and/or deer farms
- Issues: phosphorus, sedimentation, E. coli



“we’ve had 100 per cent buy-in...there’s been no one sort of saying, ‘Oh, no, that’s a load of bullshit, bugger off’...we got the worst of the fine sediment out...and for the first time since 1930 the bottom of it was seen... they can see the whitebait when they go baiting now”

### Success

- Very small area kept costs down
- In-kind government support (e.g. monitoring data, assisting with negotiations)
- Threat of prosecution and small grants (\$5000)...**BUT**
- Long term success?

“things will spring up along the banks of the creeks and someone is going to have to control them...but we're worn out...we're not attending anymore meetings...a better coordinated effort needs money”

- Local environmental NGOs in a minority of collaborations
- Scale/resources

“so they have a void there...some of the [environmental groups] have made the strategic decision not to engage in the process because they feel that they’d have more value...continuing to criticize and advocate and agitate on the outside of the process”

- Collaborative non statutory program that aims to address specific issues and guide the agency's work programme
- 5 CCM groups in practice
- 10-15 non government stakeholders, multiple government agencies (ECan, district councils)
- Large urban/rural populations
- Large estuaries, lakes (200 – 2000 km<sup>2</sup> catchments)
- Animal faeces, industry, sewage outfalls, drains, run off from farms and roads



## Some success

“they’ve been getting out, educating the community on issues, doing planting projects...the [group] look for gaps and provide another coordination point...most of those gaps have probably been closed”

## Why?

- In-kind government support
- Funding for “operational” costs (e.g. administration, hiring coordinator, fundraising and financial management)
- Long term cooperation...**BUT**
  
- Gaps in engagement, including environmental groups
- Key government stakeholders often unwilling to take significant action

“the [collaboration] is doing revegetation and the like, but I think it’s just painting over the cracks...the fundamental questions are the big water quality and quantity questions...but to be honest the district councils that can do something about that don’t want that to happen...they sit there and say nothing...they tinker around the edges. And even then they’re hardly even tinkering”



## **Some success**

- bodies formed, plans developed, outputs achieved (e.g. property management plans, protecting native riparian vegetation, building fences and clearing weeds)

## **Why?**

- operational funding/in-kind support & economic incentives

## **BUT**

- lack of significant environmental outcomes

“our budget is a few million a year. Now what we are expected to do with a few million dollars is make sustainable land use, protect all the biodiversity and fix the water quality out to the reef, all within 10 years. That’s a pretty big ask”.

- no environmental NGO representative on bodies, and underrepresented across the state

## Conflicts: federal/state government & Qld agencies

“I see the Queensland - Federal crunch as incredibly negative. It’s stopped us getting funding when we needed our funding...and then that flows through to the community”

“the regional bodies have been evolving at the same time as the infrastructure has been...we haven’t necessarily provided them with the framework or the support to be able to achieve what we want them to achieve”

“Queensland government has just reviewed arrangements...that’s added to the cynicism of ‘well shit what are we trying to do here if we are putting all this effort into getting partnerships’... it makes it very difficult...to actually get on and commit to something”

- **Appropriate circumstances**
  - easier to establish successful collaboration where a small number of affected actors, and small scale (e.g. LSP)
- **Funding**
  - unless governments are prepared to spend substantially more on RCG, it is highly likely to suffer from gaps in engagement (e.g. CCM), sub par environmental achievements (e.g. RNRM), and/or short term success (e.g. LSP)
- **Government power sharing**
  - unwillingness of government's and agencies to share power and resources poses one of the greatest challenges to the effectiveness of many collaborative models
  - incentives, legally binding plans
- **Designing effective incentives**
  - “negative” and economic incentives need to be harnessed to ensure that many otherwise unwilling stakeholders engage in collaboration (e.g. LSP, RNRM)

# Discussion – Environmental Groups

- Local environmental NGOs (as opposed to peak state or national groups) were the only ones to engage
- However, local NGOs were only evident in a minority of cases
- Overcoming these limitations?
  - government funding to support under funded NGOs
  - different levels of operation that provided different avenues for state/national as well as local environmental NGOs to determine the scale and nature of their participation

END