

Dr. Kathrin Böhling

with Monika Arzberger, Dominik Himmler
and Dr. Klaus Wagner

Technische Universität München
Lehrstuhl für Wald- und Umweltpolitik
Hans-Carl-von-Carlowitz Platz 2
85354 Freising

boehling@tum.de

27. February 2012

Abstract

Submitted to: Third Berlin Forum 'Innovation in Governance'

Innovative forest governance in the Bavarian Alps: Moving between rhetoric and actual practice

The state of Bavaria in Germany started more recently experimenting with governance innovations in forest policy. In a number of pilot programs, early involvement of different stakeholders is now considered crucial to achieve intended objectives (e.g. protection of biodiversity, avoidance of natural hazards, or adaptation to changed climate conditions). One of these experiments concerns the so-called "Mountain forest offensive" ("Bergwaldoffensive"). It was launched in 2008 by the Bavarian Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry to restore the protective function of the vulnerable mountain forest in light of climate change. To achieve this aim and create a general sense of ownership in the overall process, the mountain forest offensive envisions involvement of different stakeholders at local level (e.g., local authorities, foresters, hunters, nature conservationists, tourism associations).

Involvement of stakeholders is organized in different ways by the locally-operating state offices for food, agriculture and forestry ("Ämter für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Forst"). While steering committees were created in some areas to define and oversee the implementation of the specific measures, small and rather informal working groups emerged in others. Moreover, means for mediation have been made available to accommodate potential conflicts among the participating stakeholders. In practice, however, these means were not enacted. Finally, the forest mountain offensive introduced the role of project management to establish communication and cooperation, including conflict management, across the relevant sectors ("Bergwaldmanagement"). As the state offensive was progressing, the incumbents of project management turned out to play a key role in the overall process.

The emphasis on participation and collaborative forest planning in the mountain forest offensive goes somewhat uneasy with the historically-grown, government centered top-down approach in this field (see Franz 2010; Suda 2002). Its implementation illustrates the 'paradox' of innovation, which is to depart from the past by continuing it, and to continue the

past by interrupting the flow of events (Waldenfels 1998: 96; see Rammert 1997). Part of this departure was the widely shared perception among foresters that different instruments than those of the past were perhaps more useful to successfully restore the protective function of the mountain forests, as empirical evidence of a research project (2009-2011) conducted at the TUM chair of forest and environmental policy reveals. Simultaneously, the established 'policy arrangement' in this specific field with its prevailing discourse, coalitions and oppositions between the actors involved, their resources (e.g. authority, money, knowledge) and rules of the game (Veenman et al. 2009) dominates implementation of the mountain forest offensive at local level. A lot of times, decided measures in the mountain forest offensive center on forest conversion and are locked into the age-old conflict between hunters and foresters to the neglect of other potential players and concerns in the field.

Initial findings from the above mentioned project underscore an important argument in the scholarly debate on new modes of forest governance of a disjuncture between programmatic rhetoric and actual practice (e.g., Hogl et al. 2008; Raitio 2008). Viewed from that perspective, the forest offensive is 'ideology' (Brunsson 1989). It is adopted in a changing environment of reduced government spending and the 'participatory turn' in environmental policy but is decoupled from the established way of forest management in the Bavarian Alps. Yet, there are important differences as to the ways in which such decoupling occurs.

Whereas in the eastern areas, a slow uptake of the offensive, frustration among project managers, and political pressure from the top to deliver results at the implementing levels dominates the picture, participating areas in the West of the Bavarian Alps act more entrepreneurial. There, the official stakeholder rhetoric of the state offensive is used strategically to further own interests and to alter the regional state office's image vis-à-vis other administrations and players at that level. Moreover, and in contrast to the other regions, substantial re-orientation of forest management seems to be taking place as well. Co-decision making with an enlarged group of stakeholders is now frequently practiced in the Western Alps of Bavaria. That hierarchical steering is met by cross-sectoral partnering with stakeholders and emergence of new repertoires in management of mountain forests results in disputes within and among the offices that participate in the state offensive.

The complex relationship between the forest offensive's rhetoric and actual practice requires further attention. There is great variety in the actual practices of implementing the mountain forest offensive while each of the participating offices is keen to represent that program's espoused rhetoric to the outside world. To explore the relationship between these two levels of governance innovations in forest policy, a cross-case analysis will be conducted with a focus on two exemplary areas: one in which the past clearly dominates the present and stakeholder involvement becomes relevant only upon pressure from above vs. one in which entrepreneurship from bottom-up fuels stakeholder involvement with unintended consequences for the substance and organization of regional mountain forest policy.

Empirically, the paper draws on extensive field work in the above mentioned project and additional semi-structured interviews with project managers and staff in the locally-based state offices for agriculture and forestry. It is framed within the more recent work on 'institutional work' in institutional theory of organization sociology (e.g. Dorado 2005; Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Lawrence et al. 2009) which brings out the paradox of innovation through emphasis on both maintaining and creative practices in the implementation of the forest offensive.

References

- Brunsson, Nils (1989) *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions and Actions in Organizations*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Dorado, Silvia (2005) "Institutional entrepreneurship, partaking and convening", *Organization Studies* 26 (3): 383-413
- Franz, Thorsten (2010) *Forstverwaltungssysteme*, Remagen: Verlag Kessel.
- Hogl, Karl, Ralf Nordbeck, and Michael Pregernig (2008) "New Modes of Governance: Programmatic Rhetoric and Actual Practices", *GAIA*, 17 (4): 399-401.
- Hogl, Karl, Ralf Nordbeck, and Michael Pregernig (2008) "GoFOR – New modes of governance for sustainable forestry in Europe", Final Activity Report of EU funded project no. 6447GoFor, 16.09.2008.
- Lawrence, Thomas B. and Roy Suddaby (2006) "Institutions and institutional work", in S. R. Clegg et al. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Organization Studies*, London: Sage, pp. 215-254.
- Lawrence, Thomas B., Roy Suddaby, and Bernhard Leca (2009) "Introduction: theorizing and studying institutional work", in T. B. Lawrence et al. (eds.) *Institutional work. Actors and agency institutional studies of organizations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-27.
- Raitio, Kaisa (2008) "You can't please everyone" – *Conflict management practices, frames and institutions in Finnish state forests*, Doctoral dissertation, Joensuu University, Finland.
- Rammert, Werner (1997) „Innovationen – Prozesse, Produkte, Politik“. In: W. Rammert & G. Bechmann (Eds.) *Technik und Gesellschaft*, Jahrbuch 9, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 7-13.
- Suda, Michael (2002) "Der Förster zwischen Fremd- und Selbstbild", in Bayr. Staatsforstverwaltung (ed.) *250 Jahre Bayerische Staatsforstverwaltung. Rückblicke, Einblicke, Ausblicke*, München: pp. 391-401.
- Veenman, Sietske, Duncan Liefferink, and Bas Arts (2009) "A short history of Dutch forest policy: The 'de-institutionalisation' of a policy arrangement", *Forest Policy and Economics* 11: 202-208.
- Waldenfels, Bernhard (1991): *Der Stachel des Fremden*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.