

Regional Governance and Biosphere Reserves

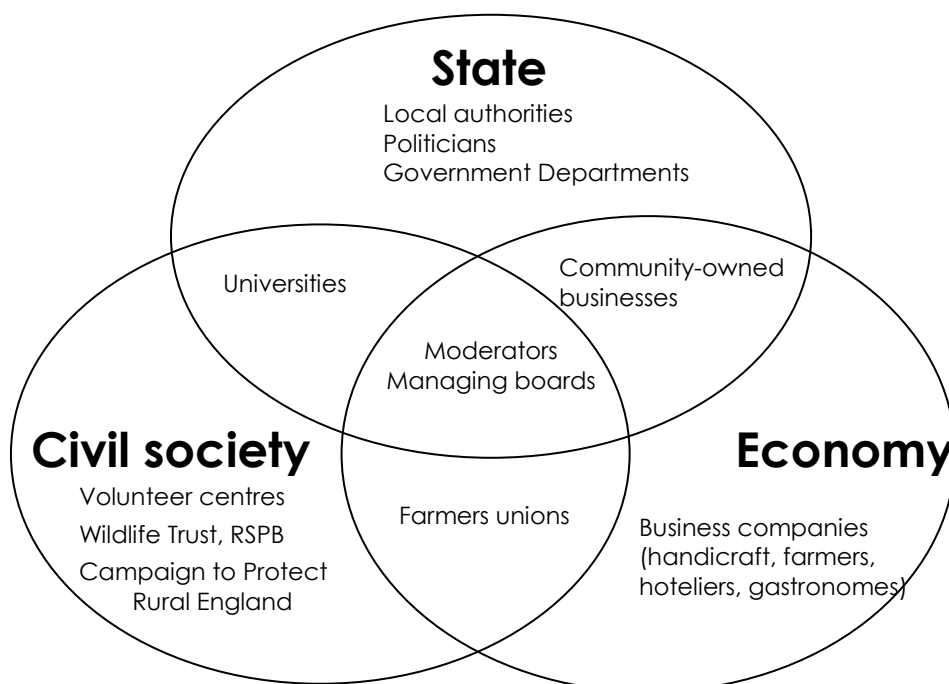
Empiric results from case-studies in Germany and Great Britain

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and main questions of the project

The subject of this project is about sustainable development in rural areas with Biosphere Reserves. For the development of sustainable regions it is a key issue to involve all stakeholders on a regional level and it is especially important that there are organisational structures, which work continuous. For the development of a common vision and to increase the regional capacity in problem solving, it is important to involve very different kind of actors. Therefore these organisational structures have to connect actors with diverging interests: on a thematic view you can for example differentiate actors from agriculture, tourism, nature conservation or the local trade and handicraft. Another distinguishing feature to be taken into account is the sector to which the actors belong: the state, the private or the civil society. Examples for important actors in rural areas and their classification in to these sectors (and their intersections) are shown in the figure below.



The concept of *Regional Governance* is suitable for discussing the working together of actors from these different sectors. In this context *Regional Governance* is defined as a network-like collaboration of the state, the private sector and the civil society with the aim of coordinating actions of different actors and regulating processes of common problem solving (FÜRST et al. 2005). An important aspect for the sustainability and functionality of the development of a self-steering mechanism in the regions is the interaction with common goods for example those of natural resource management. Therefore, regions where Biosphere Reserves are located will be exemplified in the research project.¹

The main research questions are:

- How do different institutional frameworks influence the development of *Regional Governance* patterns and which role play state-run opportunity structures (e.g. funding programmes or guidelines) and which opportunities are created by Biosphere Reserves?
- What type of problems result from the co-actions of different types of actors? How stable are such self-government patterns?
- A third question would be about the role of "place" (HEALEY 2002) or rather the collaborative responsibility for the common place.

The analysis of new patterns of *Regional Governance* is the result of five case studies (three Biosphere Reserves in Germany and two in the UK), which allows comparing the different trials for sustainable regions and the specific institutional boundary conditions in Germany and the UK. The research is based on the use of interviews (with around 15 to 20 actors in every region) and content analysis of documents.

1.2 Institutional frameworks and Biosphere Reserves

Patterns of *Regional Governance* are embedded in a multi-level governance system (BACHE & FLINDERS 2004). Many different levels of the institutional framework influence processes of regional development. This starts on the parish and district level with the structures and decision-making of the local authorities. In the UK different governmental settings (such as the CROW act) are relevant on a national level. The European Union brings funding as the Leader+ program, which is a good example, how an external program can connect actors of different interest groups, who without this program would not have met.

Interesting opportunity structures - coming from the international level (from UNESCO) - are Biosphere Reserves, which exist in almost 100 countries. Biosphere Reserves are areas promoting solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. A Biosphere Reserve is intended to fulfil three basic functions (see <http://www.unesco.org/mab/nutshell.htm>):

- **Conservation function:** to contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation;

¹ The research project ("Regional governance and common goods – the case of natural resources"; Research Director: Prof. Dr. Dietrich Fürst, research associates Marion Lahner, Kim Pollermann) it is financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Council).

- **Development function:** to foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable;
- **Logistic function:** to support research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.

Within this worldwide network exchanges of information, experience and personnel are promoted. Usually Biosphere Reserves are organized into three interrelated zones, known as the core area, the buffer zone and the transition area. But it is important to know, that Biosphere Reserves, at the time when the UNESCO-program "Man and the Biosphere" started in the seventies, did not have this wide and integrated approach. Then a Biosphere Reserve was mainly a pure nature conservation designation. A milestone for the new conception was the international Conference on Biosphere Reserves, held in Seville (Spain) in 1995. There criteria were formulated, which include requirements of the development function, organisational structures, monitoring and the involvement of the local communities.

In the UK there exist eight Biosphere Reserves. They all were first designated in the seventies and in fact up to now only one of those meets the Seville criteria (the Branton Burrows in Northern Devon, which is the only reserve who does not only have a core but also a buffer and transition zone). Hopefully others in the UK will follow, and in some regions consultation processes with the local people have already started and are on a good way.

In Germany up to now there are fourteen Biosphere Reserves and all of them have a zoning with core, buffer and transition zone. Most of them made successful trials to support sustainable economic development. For example there were projects to promote regional and ecological grown products, which contributes to a regional circular flow economy. The Biosphere Reserves in Germany have – in contrast to the majority of Biosphere Reserves in the UK – an own administration. Most of them even have statutory power, because they accomplish the function as a public authority for nature protection. On the one hand this institutional framework gives the Biosphere Reserves continuity, but on the other hand sometimes the local communities feel restricted (especially because in Germany there is a strong tradition of local planning autonomy). In many cases the reason for such conflicts was, that the participation of regional stakeholders was performed too late and too limited.

1.3 Collaboration of different types of actors

Between the different types of actors there are typical differences in their behaviour:

- *State:* public authorities are often restricted through a bureaucratic framework. Politicians are sometimes very concerned with the benefit for their „own“ region or small part of a region, which can cause problems for a larger collaboration. In general actors from state dislike giving away part of their competences.
- *Economy:* business people usually are looking for an economic benefit for their companies. In addition the time-problem is relevant ("business is too busy"). Business people often prefer single projects and do not want to discuss for too long.
- *Civil society:* such actors are used to have longer negotiations, but dislike hierarchical decisions and are not always familiar with market rules.

A general problem is that those groups use different vocabulary and set different priorities in analysing regional problems. In this context one has to mention that communication problems also arise from the different problem-solving strategies of academics and "ordinary people". But for the highly complex issue of a sustainable development the crux of the matter is to overcome the resulting friction right from the start and not only respect but even accomplish these different ways of problem solving. Altogether the collaboration of different types of actors needs more time, but it enables better solutions, reciprocal learning processes and a stable, trustful relationship, which is the base for future activities.

If they are used properly, Biosphere Reserves could offer suitable conditions for a sustainable development. To work successfully is a key-issue to make sure an early and fair involvement of all relevant groups of actors in a durable way (secured by the institutional framework of the Biosphere Reserve; e.g. management boards, partnerships). Therefore it is important to know their typical ways of behaviour and give everyone the opportunity to make their specific knowledge and abilities available for common problem solving.

2 Case-studies of biosphere reserves in Great Britain

2.1 Branton Burrows

2.1.1 Abstract

Branton Burrows Biosphere Reserve is situated in South-West-England, in the North-West of the county of Devon. It comprises the estuarine area of the rivers Taw and Torridge and thereby mainly stretches across the districts North-Devon and Torridge. Altogether the Biosphere Reserve comprises an area of 14,177 hectare. But the transition area is not well-defined so that the field of action of the Biosphere Reserve stretches across the whole river catchment which has a size of about 2,000 km². The Branton Burrows Biosphere Reserve was already designated in 1976. At that time it consisted only of a core area. It has been extended in 2002. The recent borders of the Biosphere Reserve surround the whole North Devon AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Of special importance for the processes at the Branton Burrows BR are the meetings of the BR as well as the Taw-Torridge-Estuary Forum (TTEF) and the of the LEADER+ process and of the AONB.

The satisfaction of the interviewees with all of the three processes (TTEF, LEADER, BR) is medium up to high. The satisfaction with TTEF (medium: 7.7) is a little bit higher than that with LEADER+ (medium: 7.4). The evaluation of the BR was a little bit lower altogether (medium: 6). In case of the TTEF, especially the continuous co-operation of the different groups of actors is seen as success.

Typical estimation of the BR is an acceptance in principle and a very positive expectation but dissatisfaction about the delays that occurred in 2005 because these delays slowed down the enthusiasm that was existing during the time of the extension processes in 2002 and 2003

because there was no visible advancement. According to this, the following estimation is not untypical: “*medium, because it hasn’t gone as far as I wanted it to, I have great optimism what it can do; for this I would give it a ten*”.

All in all, the interviewees are of the opinion, that both TTEF and LEADER+ have reached positive results. In the overall view one has to make different statements for the different fields of action:

- positive developments can be found in the LEADER+ projects
- the main focuses of action of the TTEF in the fields of regulation of conflicts for leisure activities, improvement of the co-operation of the two districts and the improvement of awareness for cooperation also have to be estimated positively

An estimation of the key indicators, which is going beyond this is difficult, because the BR has not been established long enough yet, and the TTEF is more confined to the estuarine area so that land-use is barely influenced by this.

2.1.2 Conclusion

In Branton Burrows Biosphere Reserve one has to consider very different processes. The Biosphere Reserve itself is still in the state of initiation. The LEADER-process and the TTEF are established. In case of the TTEF are remarkable its continuance (more than 20 years), its complimentary organisational core and the civil society-character.

Hitherto, the BR has a good image and is seen as source of hope for a sustainable (also economical) development. Discontentment results from the slow progress. Last but not least, the reason for this slow progress is to be seen in problems of co-ordination with the land owners of the core area.

Branton Burrows shows interesting forms of the development of *Governance* that have developed much more *bottom up* than in Germany and that correspond very much tighter with commitment to the region and esteem of nature and landscape. Governmental influence is relatively low but indirectly takes effect through the LEADER-programme. Indeed, the “products” of the Governance-processes are primary co-ordination-functions but barely concrete projects, barring the LEADER-projects. Thus, conflicts of distribution remain at a low level: Neither a BR interferes with the spaces of action of the agriculturists nor bigger funding requirements are requested from the actors. What is amazing is the low grade of organisation but the reason for that could be seen in the fact that there is no need of making “harder” decisions. Furthermore, a longer tradition of co-operation is existing as well as an apparently highly-developed consciousness that you have to do something for the commonwealth.

In Branton Burrows you can also find aspects of “*Place-making*” because immigrants come to the region due to the attractive nature and landscape, and the improvement of life quality in the region is an aim of the plannings. That is why Branton Burrows can serve as example for how nature and landscape bring together actors for “*Place-making*” from what *Governance*-arrangements develop. Indeed, it has not been put to the test yet: At LEADER+ the actors acted co-operative because it was the matter of money of third persons that had to be bidden for.

The BR-project has not developed far enough yet to let critical fields of conflicts become apparent. Thus, the transition area does barely play a practical role yet so that the future need for action is to be seen especially in the involvement of the people who are working and living here. For that purpose, positive co-operation-experiences of TTEF and LEADER+ who already include both districts could be used as a trustful basis.

2.2 Biosphere reserve Dyfi

2.2.1 Abstract

Dyfi Biosphere Reserve is situated in Wales at the estuary of the river Dyfi. It comprises 1,589 ha, the whole Dyfi Valley stretches about 700 km² (=70,000 ha). The area of the current BR is situated in the county Ceredigion; the actual core areas are located south of the estuary. The extension that is being thought about furthermore stretches over parts of the counties Powys and Gwynedd, too.

The structures of EcoDyfi, the steering-group of the BR as well as the support programmes '*Communities First*' and '*Tourism Growth Area*' are important arenas for the whole Dyfi Valley. Given that the Biosphere Reserve Dyfi will stretch over three counties after the planned extension governance is not easy because of the required co-operation of the three counties.

The idea of EcoDyfi (or '*Dyfi Eco Valley Partnership*') arose in 1997. During the first two years a formal institutionalisation had been taking place step-by-step ("*developed during 1997, established in 1998 and incorporated in 1999*") (Dev & Act Plan, 1)).

The satisfaction of the interviewees with all of the three processes (BR, EcoDyfi, Leader+) is rated medium up to high. Thereby, the satisfaction ('*fine*', '*great*') with EcoDyfi (medium: 8) is higher than that with the BR (medium: 6.8). In case of EcoDyfi, especially the involvement of local actors is mentioned as success ("*attention to the task of sustainable development*") [Z-7].

The typical estimation of the BR is a great satisfaction about the last twelve months and great dissatisfaction about the late start [S-4] and the wide interval after the '*Dyfi Biosphere Conference*' and about the slow progression ("*slow, so low rating*") [S-12]).

Indeed, there exists a positive expectation about the future development of the BR.

The potentially improved access to funding programmes ("*possibly open more doors to funding*") [Z-11] is seen as another positive aspect. In addition, environmental interest groups (like RSPB) seeing a certain division of work (considered positively for all intents and purposes), thus, they themselves are more active in the core area and buffer zone, whereas the transition area with its contributions to regional development is seen as the field of action of EcoDyfi [Z-11].

Altogether, the interviewees are of the opinion that EcoDyfi did achieve positive results. However, the review of the realisation of the measures that are listed in the '*Development and Action Plan*' did show that it had not been possible to realize many of them yet. Furthermore, one has to differentiate: according to the main focuses of action of EcoDyfi positive developments are to be seen in the fields of tourism and awareness arising. The region is

considered to be successful especially in the production of renewable energy sources (primarily wind energy, but also the utilization of water power is increasing) (“*this region exports electricity*” [W-6]). The situation of agriculture on the other hand has barely been influenced yet “*I wouldn’t claim, that we have a big impact in land use*” [Z-7].

There are no effects attributed to the BR yet but positive effects are expected for the future: “*to make the area a cleaner, better place*” [W-14] in addition an integrative proceeding is requested “*things have to work hand in hand, because if you miss a knurl in an engine somewhere, the engine won’t work*” [W-14].

All in all, the tendency of the **socio-economic development** can be regarded as being slightly positive. For instance, sectors with relevance for sustainability have by all means also developed economically positive (e.g. meanwhile, the number of employees at Dulas Ltd. did increase up to 30), CAT is to be seen as the biggest employer of the region, even if many employees can not be employed all-season.

2.2.2 Conclusion

For the evaluation of the processes in Dyfi Biosphere Reserve one has to point out that the BR currently is made up of only of a core area and the extension process has not been finalised yet.

However, Eco Dyfi, an organisation affected by civil society with which is tightly co-operated at the initializing process of the BR, is established for ten years now. Eco Dyfi has emerged as the core of a *Regional Governance Arrangement*, even if its factual impact is still low. However, the organisation is a motor and promoter of regional developments and it shows approaches of *Place-making*: it uses the commitment of the population (and of important actors) to the region as well as to nature and landscape for regional future-concepts and it purposefully focuses on awareness arising as well as on the amelioration of life quality as a key of a collective future-development.

Thereby, the process is supported by complementary processes, last but not least also by the settlement of CAT (as a sustainability-orientated tourism-attraction). Indeed, apparently there has been little success yet in integrating agriculture into processes like this.

What is uniting the relevant actors of the region is the effort of getting subsidies from outside. For without that external grant the possibilities of development of the region seem to be very limited.

In turn, one can see the particularities of the institutional and socio-cultural environment: Dyfi Valley is a relatively homogenous area, which also in the awareness of the population is recognized as a region (which creates an additional power of commitment through welsh culture and language) and which markets itself to the outside in terms of nature and landscape. Another additive aspect is the relatively low population figure: indeed, on the one hand it can facilitate co-operation, but on the other hand – because of the spatial situation– it might heighten the effort of co-operation.

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