Participation Approaches to Governance: Implications for Environmental Management

Enfoques participativos da governabilidade:
Implicações no gerenciamento ambiental

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ABSTRACT: This article offers an analytic summary of approaches to participatory governance that highlights key elements of the general range of relationships between the citizens and government including agencies. The focus of this discussion is placed on the core concepts central to civic engagement: enhancing citizen trust citizen efficacy, citizen competence, governmental responsiveness and legitimacy. These core concepts--that have implications for citizen-agency relationships that rage from adversarial to citizen-centered--are offered as an initial framework that can be applied to environmental management. Environmental management lessons are included to extend the framework for potential application. The central argument advanced is that *citizen centered public management* offers the most potential in expanding both citizen trust and governmental responsiveness, but it is likely to be the most difficult to achieve. It very well may be worth the effort.

Keywords: participation; environmental management.

RESUMO: O presente artigo oferece um sumário analítico de diferentes abordagens para a governança participativa que evidenciam elementos-chave no âmbito geral das relações entre cidadãos e governo, incluindo as agências. O foco dessa discussão são os conceitos essenciais para o engajamento do cidadão: aumentar a confiança do mesmo, a sua eficácia, a sua competência, capacidade de resposta e legitimidade dos governos. Estes conceitos essenciais – que têm implicações para a relação entre cidadãos e agências governamentais que variam desde relações competitivas, onde esses são adversários, para aquelas centradas no cidadão – são oferecidos como um recorte inicial que pode ser aplicado para o gerenciamento ambiental. Lições de gerenciamento ambiental são incluídas para estender o recorte para aplicação potencial. O argumento central é que a administração pública centrada no cidadão oferece o maior potencial em expandir a confiança do mesmo e a capacidade de resposta governamental, mas é provável que seja mais difícil de atingi-la. Porém, é bem provável que o esforço valha a pena.

Palavras-chave: participação; gerenciamento ambiental.

Environmental management is increasingly being considered more than an environmental problem where humans encroach on natural habitats and organic processes impeding the ability of the environmental system to naturally maintain the system through natural and sustainable processes. Recently, a popular paradigm or approach is to construct environmental management from three perspectives: environmental, economic and social. The assumption of this paradigm is that by integrating these three domains into a single decision analysis we can avoid the "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin 1968) where rational farmers overgraze common lands into order to produce incomes that eventually harms all in the system. There is need for achieving environmental care, for economic well being, and for social equality and justice at the same time. This recognition is a significant step forward in thinking as it expands our intellectual horizons and calls for creativity in thinking and application. Will this approach be useful? What are the factors to consider when we consider this approach?

This article advances the argument that citizens are integral to any environmental management paradigm. While there are many different strategies that may achieve citizen participation, citizen engagement will be most effective. This article reviews approaches to participatory governance that highlight key elements of the general range of relationships between the citizens and government including agencies. The focus of the discussion is then placed on the core concepts central to civic engagement: enhancing citizen trust citizen efficacy, citizen competence, governmental responsiveness and legitimacy. These core concepts – that have implications for citizen-institutional relationships that rage from adversarial to citizen-centered – are offered as an initial framework that can be applied to environmental management. Environmental management lessons are included to extend the framework for potential application. The central argument advanced is that *citizen centered public management* offers the most potential in expanding both citizen trust and governmental responsiveness, but it is likely to be the most difficult to achieve.

Approaches to Civic Engagement

It is difficult to define civic engagement because it can take so many different forms. Macedo et al, (2005) broadly defines civic engagement as "any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity" (2005 p. 6). In previous work (Cooper, Bryer and Meek 2006), we have identified five broad categories of civic engagement that we

have found useful to distinguish. The range of categories begins with adversarial and confrontational approaches and culminates with deliberative and collaborative approaches to civic engagement. These five kinds of civic engagement are used as part of a framework that is juxtaposed against a similar range of kinds of bureaucratic responsiveness in order to identify various possibilities of civil-institutional governance patterns.

One approach to civic engagement is *adversarial engagement* which refers to a class of citizen activities, both individual and collective, that seek to extract concessions from government through the use of confrontation, legal or otherwise. While many of these efforts have led to successful short-term concessions from governmental authorities, long-term reliance on these approaches are dubious due to the continuation of elite structures that are essential in the creation of long-term system-wide change (Priven and Coward 1977).

Electoral engagement, the most common type of civic activity, involves the practice of voting, contributing to campaigns, working with political parties and their candidates, offering opinions on policies and candidates through the media and running for office. In the United States, while there are several points of time when electoral participation has increased, the general trend is downward. Fox and Miller (1995), King and Stivers (1998), Fung (2003) and Macedo et al. (2005) have reasoned the decline to be attributed to an increasing unreachable government and a failing representative process.

Information Exchange refers to civic engagement activities that involve information exchange is an important tradition in American governmental practice. There are various forms of information exchanges between civilians and governmental agencies that range from passive activities (access to governmental documents and reports) to active activities (participation in city council meetings, hearings, civic consultations, citizen satisfaction surveys). While the goal of information exchange is to improve policy information dissemination and to obtain policy feedback, they are limited in terms of developing mutual understanding of policy design or impact (Baker, Addams and Davis .

Civil Society refers to a large class of social engagement that foster community, including participation in volunteer organizations, religious institutions, social clubs, city celebratory functions, school boards, and other local social functions. These activities are richly contextual and form the basis from which people gather, discuss, and share ideas about

society. However, Robert Putnam (2000) has found that these types of associations are in decline in the United States leading to a decline in citizen trust in government.

Deliberative engagement refers to a collection of civic engagement strategies that are designed to develop a shared sense of understanding among stakeholders with regard to joint or collective action. One hallmark of this strategy is the reliance on extended engagement and dialogue among all participants in an iterative process. The idea behind deliberation is to move well beyond comments that are designed to capture mere pluralities but to deepen shared meaning of the value of mutually understood issues and consequent action. Another characteristic of deliberative engagement is inclusivity. Deliberative approaches attempt to include different kinds of stakeholders so as to develop a broader meaning of commonly held space.

In a recent summary article on civic engagement, the prominent scholar on ethics and citizenship, Terry L. Cooper of the Civic Engagement Initiative (CEI) at the University of Southern California, defined civic engagement as "people participating together for deliberation and collective action within an array of interests, institutions and networks, developing civic identity, and involving people in governance processes" (Cooper 2005, p. 534). Embedded in this definition are concepts central to understanding improvement of public discourse over shared and common interests: bureaucratic responsiveness, collaborative learning, and trust. Each of the concepts is strengthened through a conscientious deliberative process among stakeholders, what we have termed "*citizen centered public management*" or CCPM (Cooper, Bryer and Meek 2006). Some dramatic examples of deliberative processes have appeared in recent years, including the citizen-budgetary processes in Porto Alegre, Brasil (Baiocchi 2003), agency-neighborhood council service Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) in Los Angeles (Bryer and Cooper 2006) and grass-roots school and police collaboration in Chicago (Fung 2003; Fung 2006).

Bureaucratic Responsiveness

A central feature of action learning is the role of the bureaucracy. It is evident that any form of civic engagement calls upon a responsive bureaucracy. Recent research portrays an array of bureaucratic responses is in evidence (Bryer 2007). For the purposes of this paper, the range of bureaucratic responses is portrayed from control-centered (a top down, elected official

orientation) to deliberative (collaborative and facilitative orientation with openness to citizen involvement and participation).[2]

Having reviewed the dimensions of civic engagement and bureaucratic responsiveness, we can now frame the range of patterns of civic-institutional relationships that are possible within these parameters and to assess emergent patterns in terms of governance outcomes. With the range of civic engagement possibilities on the horizontal axis and the range of bureaucratic responsiveness on the vertical axis, four kinds of civic-institutional patterns are identified: (1) *disparate anomie* (collaborative bureaucracy with adversarial citizen engagement); (2) *civic conflict spiral* (adversarial civic engagement and control-centered bureaucracy); (3) *civic cooptation* (collaborative civic strategy and a control-centered bureaucracy); and (4) *civic engagement* (collaborative civic engagement and collaborative-oriented bureaucracy). For a representation of these patterns, see figure 1.

Environmental Management Experiments [3]

Collaborative Principles in Environmental Management

Before we make the transition to the implications of collaborative public management in the field of environmental management, it is useful to comment how significant the field of environmental management looks upon the role of citizens in addressing environmental concerns. The prominent researcher John Randolph views public involvement in environmental land use planning and management as a "quiet revolution" and prefers to call the various community based approaches "collaborative environmental planning and management" (Randolph 2004 p. 53). In his review of collaborative planning experiments, Randolph has observed the creation of many innovative solutions to environmental problems. Because of the recent trend to deregulate traditionally governmental administrative systems, Randolph argues that new forms of collectivities will be needed to find a balance in social, economic and environmental objectives. In his work, Randolph outlines the key components

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[2] The work of Thomas Bryer (2007) expands on the dimensions of these kinds of responsiveness domains based on the ethical perspectives (control-centered, discretionary and deliberative) each with two differentiated dimensions (dictated and constrained, purposive and entrepreneurial, collaborative and negotiated, respectively).

[3] Parts of this section of the paper are derived form a review by Wendy Gregory and Jack W. Meek on studies presented at the Australia-New Zealand Systems Conference (ANZSYS) on "Sustaining Our Social and Natural Capital," held in Katoomba, Australia, December 3-6, 2006.

to environmental planning, including *how to collaborate* (building consensus and responsibility, stakeholder involvement, collaborative learning), the techniques for collaboration, how to *implement* joint action (involving stakeholders) and creating the foundation for sustainable designs through *citizen monitoring* and feedback.

What follows in this section is a selective review of some current approaches to land use planning and environmental management strategies. This selective review offers lessons related from environmental management experiences. These experiences are organized as they relate to (1) preparing educational support for building community appreciation for environmental concerns; (2) implementation of environmental strategies; and (3) monitoring environmental experiences. Citizen involvement is differentiated in each of the cases. After the review, the paper will examine the characteristics of these approaches and their promise in regard to the governance patterns previously outlined.

Preface to Building Consensus: Active Learning and Education

In research conducted by Maxwell and Lin-Yo (2006), summarizes a number of projects based in the Greater Blue Mountains Heritage area. These projects have served to bring together people from diverse communities in order to address environmental issues through process of cultural appreciation and development. Using various art forms, ranging from story telling and oral histories through to films, music and visual arts, community members were empowered to consider the role of culture and cultural differences in informing environmental decision-making. Cheryle Lin-Yo examines the development of civic or social capital and the development of greater environmental awareness achieved in this process. Bronwin addresses a school based project (Earth Journeys) designed to link schools in the local heritage area with other schools "on the doorstep." This is intended to ensure that learning about local environmental issues is able to "ripple out" to the wider community. As a whole the paper provides evidence that community and sustainability are powerful concepts that can be learned. The paper draws lessons from two programs – the Community Cultural Development program (CCD) and "Earth Journey" – that are illustrative examples of human learning potential. Based on the logics of interdisciplinarity and contextuality, the protocols outlined in both CCD and Earth Journeys offer evidence that these learning protocols are transformative.

<u>Implementing</u>

Special Improvement Districts as Financing Tools

Another kind of approach to environmental management includes land management strategies in the design of special improvement districts. These approaches reflect the momentum toward an on-going and significant rise in the privatization of public space.

Research conducted by Jeff Pompe (2006) focuses on the developing phenomenon of gated communities that are island or coastally based. The paper highlights how those who benefit from the access and aesthetic value of a pristine environment should also pay the costs of securing the coastal surrounds that they enjoy. Looking at the role of private neighborhood associations (PNAs) in sustaining the natural ecosystems, the author shows how premiums for gated communities can assist with this and highlights the fairer distribution of costs for costal protection by allocating these to those who benefit most from the enhanced natural environment. While there are a number of concerns with regard to the use of PNAs (including inequities in housing and land access) the paper also reveals inequities in wealth accumulation. The implications of these findings for shared contributions to sustaining common shorelines and for sustaining and integrating communities are apparent but emerge in a more hidden and evolutionary form.

Community Mapping and Decision Making

In related research on special improvement districts, Susanna Schaller and Gabriella Modan (2005)*,* examine an economically and ethnically diverse neighborhood in Washington, D.C. who considering of instituting a special improvement district (Neighborhood Business Improvement District). Based upon a community-mapping analysis conducted by the authors, it was found that assumptions behind the implementation of a special improvement district vastly differed from the opinions held by those who lived in the space. In particular, the assumptions held by various stakeholders differentiated by ethnic and class distinctions. The value of this kind of deliberation over the use of public space, where the opinions of diverse stakeholders are examined and shared, offers new insight into ways public space may be utilized. The authors conclude that city officials, planners, and community development practitioners considering special assessment districts need to integrate community members'

views at every stage of the planning process and avoid the suppression of human experiences in public life and to develop a contextually rich and reflective innovative solutions to urban life as compared to simply joining the trend to apply the BID model to urban neighborhoods.

Conservation Units and Institutional Capacity

Another potentially promising environmental management strategy is the use of "conservation units" in the rain forests of Brasil. Conservation Units or *unidades de conservacao* (CUs) [4] are legally enabled jurisdictional units created to address the significant deforestation trends in evidence in the state of Rondonia, Brasil. Pedlowski et al (2005) trace the history of these units to the 1990s created by federal and state agencies to reduce the rate of deforestation, becoming law in 2000. Supported by a World Bank loan to consolidate 51 CUs into a network of national, state and municipal entities, these units represent a remarkable achievement local, state, national and international institutional collaboration. In their sophisticated assessment of the ability of the conservation units to reduce the rate of deforestation (an assessment based on remotely-sensed data from Landsat and thematic coverages), Pedlowski et al. report mixed findings with regard to the implementation utility, namely the conservation units have "been useful in curbing deforestation within their boundaries; however, many CUs face pressure from the combined activities of illegal farmers seeking new sources of timber and agricultural land" (p. 149). One central finding of the authors is that despite World Bank and federal funding, the CUs lack permanent staff and only "sporadic protective measures have been taken to enforce their (CU) limits" (p.150). In short, the CUs lack "sufficient institutional capacity to manage protected resources" and there is a need for broader stakeholder participation, "including local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private logging firms and local communities in formulating management plans for all CUs" (p. 154).

CUs like Protected Areas (PAs) are newly formed entities that deal with biodiversity conservation and have great promise, but there is need for continuous and sustained dialogue among stakeholders as to what is meant by biodiversity conservation how it is mutually managed. One finding in a study of a national park (protected area) is that there is a need for consistent representation of park use for residents (Ormsby and Kaplin 2005). Ormsby and Kaplin argue, "understanding people-PA (protected area) interactions and perceptions can

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[4] Pedlowski et al. (2005) report two categories of Conservation Units established by Federal Law 9985 /2000: IPCUs or Integral Protection Conservation Units where use of natural resources are forbidden, and SUCUs or Sustainable Use Conservation Units where sustainable use and management practices are allowed (p. 150).

help guide future PA management strategies to increase conservation effectiveness, through efforts such as environmental education and communication programs" (p. 156).

Citizen Monitoring

Triple Bottom Line

Social, environmental, and economic domains are central to sustainability. Concepts like *Triple Bottom Line* are viewed by some authors as "mutually exclusive" domains that have can have separate analytic measures that can be assessed separately or grouped together in integrative or index forms that can allow for systematic performance comparisons across companies and across systems over time (Amaral and Rovere 2003). These strategies certainly hold a great deal of merit for the global monitoring of organizational performance in the area of sustainability. Clearly, transparent data that is gathered and analyzed in comparative form and made public is an added value of information to the system that would improve informed actions, especially on specific corporations.

For broader system-wide indicators of sustainability, other authors see these domains as interrelated and argue that social sustainability is an ecosystems problem, and ecosystems sustainability is a social problem (Gregory and Meek 2007). From this perspective, the key focus is on how communities seek sustainable relations within governance structures – in urban, suburban and rural contexts – in the effort to enhance participation and community.

Elaine Hartley (2006) assesses the incommensurable positions common in *Triple-Bottom Line* (TBL) reporting and is concerned about the role the corporations and the media has in shaping people's attitudes about the abstract framing of environmental accountability which they have no direct experiential understanding. . Hartley questions whether TBL reporting can genuinely regulate socio-environmental relations, or whether they provide the illusion of progress without disturbing the status quo. One of the difficulties associated with TBL reporting is that the indicators used for social, economic and environmental assessments can not easily be aggregated, leading to people formulating preferences in a relative vacuum despite the abundance of information available. Focusing on how economic liberalism shapes

our framing of the sustainability issue, Hartley concludes that there is a need to focuses on notions of social and natural capital (community and cultural processes) that can contribute to sustaining social systems rather than reformulating the current situation. In short, Hartley raises concern about the almost blind adoptions of "abstract" logics like TBL that are derived from mental states that are far separated from the more meaningful contextually based (post formal-cognitive) learning possibilities. As a result, these abstract logics serve limited purposes, are misguided and are likely to fail.

Four-Well Beings

Localized attempts, like the *Four Well Beings*, a 2002 New Zealand local governmental legislation incorporating cultural sustainability along with environmental, social and economic sustainabilities, may be positive a positive step forward in that it recognizes localized approaches to integrated environmental planning. In the United States, the City of Santa Monica has developed a rather sophisticated approach to sustainable development that includes a mix of quantitative and participatory designs. The overall approach is approved by the city council is monitored by a citizen commission where sustainable concepts are designed, data is gathered on around measures of these concepts and where citizens monitor the results of various strategies designed to influence sustainable outcomes. These indices are reexamined as useful concepts on a periodic basis. (Sustainable Santa Monica 2007).

Framing Participation Approaches and Environmental Management

With this selective review of participatory approaches to environmental management and learning, we can now begin to map these approaches within the framework of civic engagement and bureaucratic responsiveness developed preciously in the paper.

Control-centered bureaucratic approaches, such as the *Triple-Bottom-Line* approach discussed earlier, are centralized attempts utilizing rationalist strategies that seek to integrate diverse, multiple and complex indicators into unique summarized forms of data about environmental management from an abstract perspective. While there is certainly interdisciplinary and integrative thinking producing knowledge with regard to integrating three areas of concern (environment, economy, social) the innovative concepts that evolve from this approach can

end up representing a narrowed view of environmental management that may even be a simply expression of on-going economic interests. Whatever the case, this approach on its own certainly lacks any form of contextual reality or even contextual meaning unless it has practical application and shared understanding. Both of the qualities are lacking in this approach. As such, the approach will either lead to civic cooptation attempts or to civic conflict spirals depending on the nature of civic engagement where it is employed. To avoid this outcome, the Citizen-based environmental monitoring that is promised by the *Four Well Beings* and the approach undertaken in Santa Monica, California offer some valuable alternatives to "triple-bottom-line." These approaches rely on a similar monitoring ethic that is reliant on measurement, but the key difference is that these approaches integrate community involvement and dialogue. To the degree that diverse stakeholder involvement is incorporate, there is a better chance for improved understanding of meaningful action and improved environmental practices.

The use of special improvement districts provide for a unique mix of stakeholder consensus, self-assessed financing and service implementation. These projects are not possible without stakeholder agreement and the resultant service is narrowly focused around agreed upon objectives. Most of these districts are designed in high-income areas where stakeholders are seeking added services to complement existing services. However, event those many of the jurisdictions that seek self-assessment are also accessible by additional stakeholders (these jurisdictions are public space) and it is not clear as to the assessment of added services reduces the overall service capacity that could be available system wide. In the special improvement district case, a community mapping process lead to the dismissal of the project. For financing environmental management strategies, these types of financial tools may reduce the financial burden on the general public, but at the possible expense of reduced access to public space.

Deliberative bureaucratic approaches, such as the use of conservation units and the use of community mapping both incorporate citizen engagement and have similar positive outcomes to report with regard to decision-making (with representative stakeholder s included) and management implementation (curbing deforestation). An important observation with regard to the limits of conservation units is that their needs to be sufficient bureaucratic capacity to support legal practices and confront those who are not in compliance. This means that a deliberatively oriented bureaucracy (along with a collaborative-oriented citizenry) is not

enough. Deliberative bureaucratic practices need to have the capacity to fulfill public warrants.

In Figure 1, the six environmental management practices discussed above are placed in the civic-institutional framework developed earlier in the paper.

Figure 1: Civic-Institutional Patterns in Environmental Management
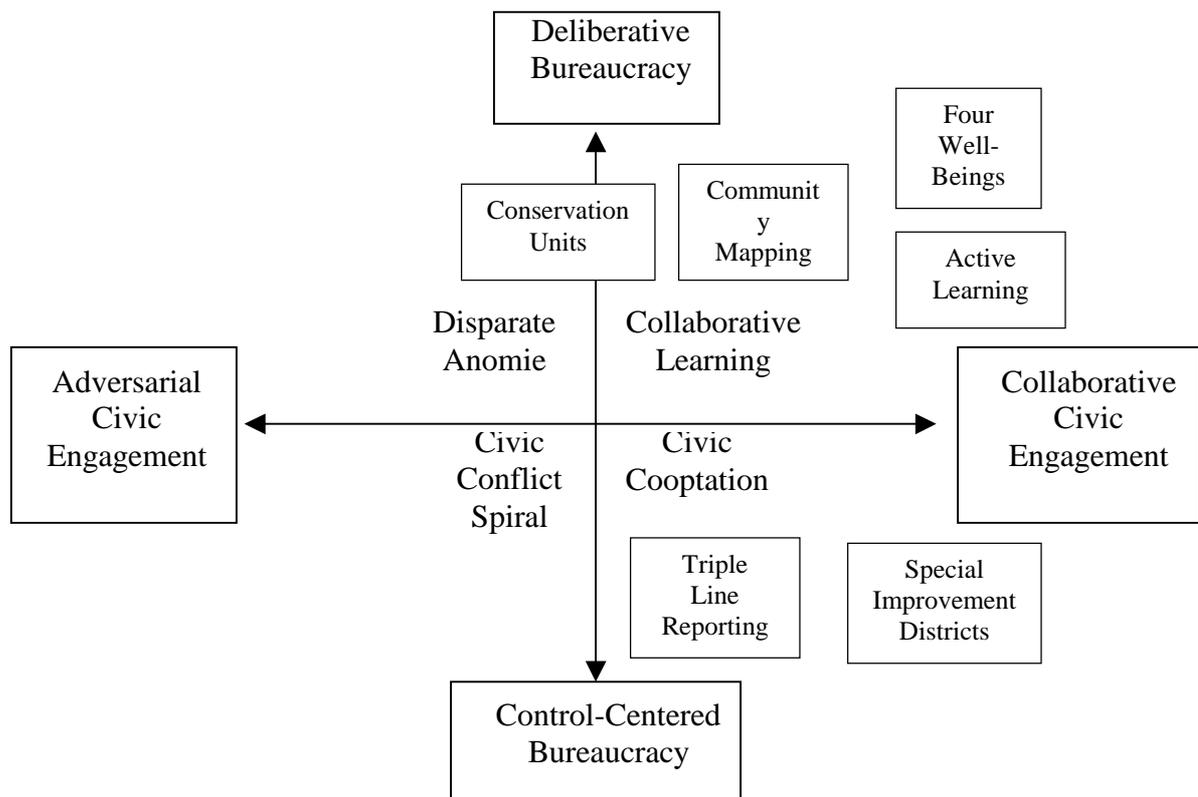
Summary

This paper offers a review of various kinds of civic engagement strategies, ranging from adversarial to deliberative, revealing the breadth civic-institutional relationships. The argument advanced is that deliberative approaches hold the promise for deepening civic engagement where mutual understandings of service delivery are derived and implemented. Far from the standard top-down directive models of civic-institutional relationships, deliberative approaches represent and exchange of democratic knowledge with various forms of scientific and managerial knowledge. Importantly, the interconnection among democratic

knowledge (lived experience), scientific knowledge (environmental processes), managerial knowledge and economic interests can offer different options for action and lay the ground for new patterns of behavior and interaction that have yet to be invented. Given the recent reports on climatic change and on the inability of the United Kingdom (Randerson 2007) and the United States (Pilkington 2007) to alter their own environmentally harmful practices, it seems clear that top-down strategies alone will not produce sustainable environmental management practices or patterns. As Fung notes, in his research on local communities, "state-centered solutions are limited for some kinds of problems that require cooperation and collaboration" (Fung 2003).

On the other hand, bottom-up strategies that are mutually designed, contextually relevant and have super-structure (political-institutional) participation and support will have enormous potential for encouraging human behavior that is compatible with environmental practices that are conducive with sustainable systems. This new understanding is difficult to construct as is calls upon not only interdisciplinary thinking, but also beckons for administrative conjunction, institutional power-sharing and the integration of interests around what we think matters: economic well-being, engaged citizenry and environmental responsibility.

The deliberative approach to collaborative public management recognizes the need for both administrative conjunction and the exchange and learning from different spheres of knowledge. The conservations units discussed earlier in this paper are a product of both a unique agreement among local, state and national units--administrative conjunction--as well as a contextual focus on the individual farmer. The lessons of agrarian reform policies, drawing from the work of Pedlowski et al. (2005), while focused on small farmers, led to a tragedy of the commons, or the anomie that we described earlier in this paper not because of the localized focus, but because of the lack of institutional capacity. There is the need to continue to seek the balance between citizen participation and institutional responsiveness and the institutional capacity to make these interconnections functional.

What is evolving is the creative use of *intermediate structures* or associations that incorporate elements of the state, of citizens and of representatives of the economic enterprise that build a new partnership if relations and action that foster new patterns of behavior that are contextually meaningful. Conservation Units, Protected Areas, Conservation Zones, Special Improvement Districts are intermediate structures that show promise for the future governing

through collaborative environmental planning and management. This kind of governance resembles that conceptualized by RAW Rhodes – the process of governing as self-organizing, inter-organizational networks with interdependence between organizations (Rhodes 1997).

Barriers to Overcome

Intermediate structures based on centered civic engagement face several challenges. First, these new arrangements must have *continuity*. The work of Ormsby and Kaplan (2005) reveal the need for not only including citizens in mutual decision making but for the constant communication with citizenry as to the agreed upon practices of land use If sustainability is our objective, our institutions need to have continuity to constantly inform and listen to public interests. This continuity will call upon an *institutional capacity* for implementation, as we learned from the work of Pedlowski et al. (2005).

In addition to continuity and capacity, intermediate structures call upon citizen participation for resultant strategies to be contextually relevant. This is an enormous challenge because of the *participation costs* (Cooper 1979) associated with citizen engagement. The time and information commitment necessary for meaningful engagement are barriers that many are seeking to address through technological interventions (Lukensmeyer and Torres 2006)). While these strategies show great promise, there is still the demand for finding ways for meaningful citizen engagement without citizens incurring costs that become barriers to participation. The burden for addressing this barrier is to be shouldered by our administrative and executive systems.

A final barrier to overcome is the need for *super-structure support*. The findings of studies on civic engagement (Fung 2003; Fung 2005; Cooper and Bryer 2007) clearly reveal that the top leadership support for these intermediate structures is a prerequisite for success. In addition to the valiant efforts of citizens, of administrators, of scientists, of corporate leaders, much will not be achieved without the support from our political leadership. This is not to say the leadership needs to initiate and then manage collective engagement efforts, they need to support those initiatives that evolve from the collective efforts of others. This recognition of the value of bottom-up momentum can also be supported with a vision of community that nurtures meaning making or sense-making (Weick 1995). This will be difficult to achieve, but

the recognition that our solutions are to be constructed in citizen-based, inclusive processes that incorporate diverse knowledge will both inform and reinforce relational patterns that can make a difference.

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