

05-2 Actors, Movements, Organisations

Organising a multi-stakeholder process

Creating a paradoxical collaborative identity

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Within this study multi-stakeholder collaboration is presented as new form of relational organising in response to a crisis of governance in the international environmental politics arena. As a form of societal collaboration, multi-stakeholder processes aim for societal change within the contested field of sustainable development. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is modelled as the discursive creation of an inherently paradoxical identity. The creation of a collaborative identity forms the basis for setting up and managing an inter-organisational collaborative process characterised by fundamental tensions. Four identity-relevant core activities were identified in an in-depth processual case analysis. The participants discursively create their collaborative identity 1) by jointly defining their issue and, intertwined with that, 2) by positioning the collaborative project in its domain, and 3) by defining their relations among the diverse participants and 4) among participants and conveners. These key collaborative activities engender inherent paradoxical tensions which the actors inevitably have to deal with. With regard to positioning the collaboration in its domain, collaborators have to establish connectivity and simultaneously distinctiveness through the way they define their issue. With regard to relating among participants, the joint issue needs to be defined in a way that integrates diversity while creating sufficient focus in order to enable joint action. Accordingly, the relations between participants and conveners also have to be defined in a way that balances leadership and ownership in order to allow for a bottom-up stakeholder-driven process, yet well-organised and focused process.

With the analysis, the convergent and divergent constructions of the focal issue as well as the diverse repertoires defining the key relations are presented and studied how they took effect over the course of the process. Furthermore the strategies participants made use of in order to deal with the paradoxical tensions and the divergent constructions are identified. The constructions, repertoires and strategies are examined for their significance for integrating diversity and enabling societal change.