Governance learning

Project Brief for Work Package 4 (WP4)

Overview

Work Package 4 (WP4) has developed out of the need for CADWAGO to work at the meta level, drawing together insights from WPs 1, 2 and 3. By looking at European governance, WP4 will draw out lessons from the case studies in the CADWAGO project and provide lessons and new theoretical insights into the field of governance learning. Its theoretical lens draws on a range of social and environmental learning traditions, and will draw on experience from past and ongoing research done by the Stockholm Environment Institute, EI, the Open University, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Wageningen University. It will also draw on the governance learning workshops (and the process design leading up to and ensuing post adaptation to case research) and the additional interactions with project stakeholders.

Aim

WP4's main purposes are: (i) to design and operationalize an enabling environment for synthesizing lessons that emerge from the case studies in the project, (ii) to provide new theoretical and practical insights into the field of governance learning, and (iii) to help bring about desirable change in European water governance domain

The lens of the science-policy interface and policy learning

WP4 will go beyond the traditional conceptualization of science as a practice that produces research to fill defined knowledge gaps. Instead, knowledge input into political processes, governance and other activities of society is seen as a dynamic social process that may develop in iterative steps (Gibbons et al. 1994). Accordingly, it involves ongoing interactions between scientists and policy-makers, agencies and interest groups, etc. The boundaries between science and other domains of society are seen as fuzzy, and boundary activities between different practices are understood as ongoing processes of cooperation, competition and confrontation between different perspectives, providing opportunities for shared learning and co-production of knowledge (Turnhout et al. 2007).

This model of learning and knowledge production as two-sided, non-linear and dynamic will serve as the theoretical and analytical lens of WP4 as it describes both how science interacts with other parts of society, and helps to negotiate the science – policy interface. These processes are of particular relevance to governance learning.

While developing knowledge, for instance about managing scarce water resources or flooding, decisions are often made that involve and affect multiple domains – this requires what organisational theorists call "boundary work". Boundary workers are recognized as facilitating the transfer and exchange of knowledge between domains (Guston 2000), as well as the development of knowledge at the boundaries of domains. This means that they must address the malleable, always provisional, and somewhat ambiguous character of the boundaries between science and other domains, and that they have to work on defining and redefining the roles of society and science in resolving societal problems (Turnhout et al. 2008).

Theories of communities of practice and landscapes of practices (Wenger 1998, 2010); theories from the domain of science and technology studies and activity theory are among those theories that can be used to explore practices (including boundary practices) in multiple domains. Such theories will contribute to the conceptualization and analysis of WP4.

Process design and methodology

The theoretical model described above will serve both practical and analytical functions. It will guide the way that WP4 project staff design and arrange activities in which CADWAGO project staff, and actors representing practices connected to water governance, share insights, ideas, results and experiences. The model will also serve as a lens to develop understanding about the interaction, shared learning and joint knowledge production that takes place during these activities, thus providing a basis for meta-level reflection.

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CADWAGO Statement

CADWAGO stands for "climate change adaptation and water governance: reconciling food security, renewable energy and the provision of multiple ecosystem services". The project aims to improve water governance by developing a more robust knowledge base and enhancing capacity to adapt to climate change. CADWAGO is led by SEI and brings together 10 partners from Europe, Australasia and North America with extensive experience in climate change adaptation and water governance issues, and will extend the global knowledge base by sharing methods and findings. CADWAGO builds on lessons from ongoing case research to create a forum and dialogue between researchers and stakeholders at different scales. Lessons from the cases will be synthesized and used to adapt European decision-making that has a global impact.

During the project period, three governance learning events for shared learning will be arranged: one in Sweden in June 2013, and one with the Open University in June 2014 and one with the University of Sicilie in June 2015. At these events stakeholders will discuss the CADWAGO project in the context of European Governance. The stakeholders are all innovation "champions" that bring about change at different levels within the European water governance network. As such they can bridge the boundary between the project and the other stakeholders in the broader European water governance context. This will provide an opportunity for CADWAGO to secure feedback on the design and purpose of the project from stakeholders working with change processes linked to water governance issues in Europe. Feedback from governance learning events may lead to the research question in the case studies being reformulated. It will also provide an opportunity for the stakeholders to learn from CADWAGO experiences and incorporate new insights into their practice. The events will be observed, taped and analyzed.

In addition, we aim to organize other activities in between the learning events that contribute to the dialogue between the CADWAGO project and the stakeholders in the field. The specific form that these activities will take will be defined after the first learning event in Sweden.

The methodology of WP4 will be characterized by the following:

- Learning "as we go", creating reflective space, learning in action
- Maximizing the potential of learning from this project through iteratively involving a broader group of stakeholders
- Using interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches
- Using narrative and systemic inquiry

Expected outcomes

WP4 is expected to generate the following outcomes:

- Insight into the dilemmas that underpin policy processes that impact on water governance in Europe
- Processes that enable all CADWAGO participants to work and learn at a meta level
- Identification of windows of opportunity to infuse systemic and adaptive water governance approaches (lesson from cases) into the European governance
- Engagement with and facilitation of governance learning processes
- Publications in high impact peer-reviewed journals and practitioner orientated publications, with an overall focus on how governance learning works in practice.

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