

A METHOD OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND CITIZEN'S COMMUNITY GROUPS FOR ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE LANDCARE MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT: With regard to achieving environmental sustainability, it has long been recognized that partnership between citizens and governments is important for conservation and for solving environmental problems. It has also been recognized that what form that partnership takes makes a difference. However we are still in the process of seeking out a methodology for an ideal form of partnership between citizens and governments. This study will focus on the partnership between citizen's community groups and governments in an Australian community-based approach to natural resource management called Landcare, which has been recognized as a successful approach for natural resource management through multi-party partnership. In the Landcare movement, local voluntary groups care for the local environment, including such things as parks, creeks, forests and farms. In order to clarify the nature of the partnership between citizen's community groups and governments in the Landcare movement, documentation analysis and in-field research in the State of Victoria, Australia, were undertaken. The in-field research included observations through participation and interviews with individuals participating in the Landcare movement as volunteers or staff members. As a conclusion, the partnership between citizen's community groups and governments in the Landcare movement has been found to include respect for the voluntary and autonomous nature of the local groups that carry out the activities for improving local environments with informational, financial, technical, and motivational support from the state and federal government.

Keywords: Partnership between Governments and Citizen's Community Groups, Environmental Sustainability, Landcare Movement in Australia, Respect for voluntary and autonomous nature of the local groups, Supports from the state governments and the federal government

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What the Partnership Should be?

Research in Japan has shown that partnership between citizens and governments has been significant for conservation and for solving environmental problems, and also that the form the partnership takes is important [1], [2].

Reference [1] points out that "For the creation of environmental capital grounded in a partnership between governments and citizens, it is important that, through making clear the roles expected of and actually performed by each, a relationship that is well suited to the needs of both be established, and that the tasks apportioned to each be made clear in order for projects to progress effectively. In case studies too, this has been a central issue." [3]. [2] also points out that "From now on, to address environmental issues, it will be important to make clear the respective roles of governments and citizens and the form that networking between these should take." [4]. As [2] points out, "Agenda 21 adopted at the United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992,

lists women, children, youth, non-governmental organisations, local governments, labourers, labour unions, the industrial world, etc., as actors who play primary roles for environment and development, and suggests the establishment of a genuine social partnership among them. This is true in conservation of the local environments." [5]. With regard to what is required for building partnerships for conservation and for dealing with environmental issues, [2] suggests the establishment of groups or organizations where people can find worthwhile activities in given local areas across Japan, and also suggests the distribution and sharing of information among citizens, businesses, and governments.

Clearly, there is a strongly sensed need for a means of partnership between citizens and governments. However, a truly effective methodology remains to be discovered.

1.2 Purpose of this Study

Keeping in mind the indications and the suggestions provided by the research mentioned in the previous section, this study will aim to clarify the nature of the partnership between citizen's

community groups and governments in an Australian community-based approach to natural resource management called Landcare, as a successful model that may be relevant to Japan. The reasons for focusing on the partnership in Landcare as a model in this study are the following:

Various stakeholders have participated in Landcare and it has been recognized as “effective” and “successful”. It “has been embraced by governments, farmer organizations, and conservation groups throughout Australia as a model for effective community action to assist the move to more sustainable resource use [6]” and is “a highly successful community-based volunteer movement that facilitates and coordinates actions to care for our environment” where people “come together to discuss shared land management issues, and to action to address these issues” [7].

Landcare has had over twenty-five years of history since its inception in 1986 in Victoria and has spread across the nation. There are more than 630 groups in Victoria alone [8] and over 5,000 groups across Australia [9].

These facts indicate that Landcare is highly regarded and that it is successfully provided a stable form of partnership between citizens’ community groups and governments.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodologies used to clarify the nature of the partnership between citizen’s community groups and governments in Landcare, were documentation analysis (including gathering information from the webpages of the related organizations on the internet), observation through participation, and interviews with individuals participating in the Landcare movement as volunteers or staff members. The in-field research, the observation through participation and the interviews with individuals, was carried out in the state of Victoria, Australia, with support from the chair of Australian Landcare International, who has been involved in Landcare since its beginning and has a broad range of contacts with individuals related to Landcare in Victoria and across Australia. The in-field research was carried out during the period from 18 March 2014 to 24 March 2014.

In this study, at first I identified the main existing institutions and the other forms of support for Landcare provided by governments, focusing on the case of the State of Victoria. I then undertook documentation analyses, observation through participation, and interviews with individuals to determine how the institutional and other forms of support identified have been working in field.

In order to identify main existing institutions and other forms of support, information was gathered from the websites of the Department of Environment

and Primary Industries in the State of Victoria, the Department of Agriculture in the Australian Government, and other related organizations.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Identifying and Categorizing Institutional and other Forms of Government Support

The institutions and the other forms of support identified for the citizen’s community groups collectively called Landcare groups or Landcare networks from the State Government of Victoria and the federal government of Australia can be categorized into four different groupings. There are informational, financial, technical, and motivational. (See Table 1)

3.2 Institutions and the other Forms of Support Identified

3.2.1 Informational Support

With regard to informational support, in the state of Victoria, the State Government of Victoria provides information related to Landcare through managing a website called Victorian Landcare Gateway and through a magazine called *Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management*. At the national level, Landcare Australia Limited which is a non-profit private company formed and funded by the federal government of Australia in order to “raise awareness and generate corporate support for Landcare” [10] provides information on its website which includes a National Landcare Directory.

With regard to the institutional support provided by the State Government of Victoria, “The Victorian Landcare Gateway is the central point of contact for Landcare in Victoria” and in this system people “can find news from Landcare groups and networks, including up-coming volunteer activities and events, resources and toolkits for groups, information on grants and projects, as well as group and network contacts” [11]. The magazines *Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management* features stories that are “primarily contributed by community Landcarers” on broad natural resource management issues and is available through the Victorian Landcare Gateway (Department of Environment and Primary Industries, the State of Victoria. Available online at <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/community-programs/landcare/victorian-landcare-gateway>. Accessed 20 July 2015).

On the other hand, with regard to support at the national level, there is the National Landcare Directory managed by Landcare Australia Limited. Through this directory, people can find Landcare groups “to volunteer and learn about Landcare activities” in given areas, related events in which people can get involved such as special events,

“regular activities,...environmental workshops, and training” in given areas, and projects “that Landcare Australia has funded in partnership with our

Corporate Partners” [12].

Table 1 Institutions and the other forms of support provided by the State Government of Victoria and the federal government

Category	institution	source	deliverer
informational	Victorian Landcare Gateway	the State Government of Victoria	DEPI
	The Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management Magazines	the State Government of Victoria (DEPI)	Available through the Victorian Landcare Gateway
	National Landcare Directory	the federal government and other organizations	Landcare Australia Limited
financial	Victorian Landcare Grants	the State Government of Victoria	10 CMAs in Victoria
	National Landcare Program Regional Funding	the federal government	56 natural resource management organizations across Australia
	Landcare tax benefits	the federal government (Department of Agriculture)	Deduction claim available via Australian Taxation Office
technical	Regional Landcare Coordinators	the State Government of Victoria (DEPI)	10 CMAs in Victoria
	Regional Landcare Facilitators	the federal government	56 natural resource management organizations across Australia
motivational	States and Territory / National Landcare Awards	the federal government	Nominations available on the internet
	Victorian Landcare Awards	the State Government of Victoria	Nominations available on the internet

Note: in Table 1, “institution” means institution and the other forms of support by the State Government of Victoria or the federal government of Australia; “source” refers to the original source or provider of the information/funding/assistance; “deliverer” refers to the institution or individuals that mediate this to the recipient. “DEPI” is for the Department of Environment and primary Industries in the State Government of Victoria, and “CMAs” is for the Catchment and Management Authorities.

3.2.2 Financial Support

With regard to financial support, in the state of Victoria, the State Government of Victoria provides funding in the form of Victorian Landcare Grants. At the national level, the federal government provides funding through National Landcare Program Regional Funding and also provides the possibility of tax deductions for landowners incurring capital expenditures for their property improvements (known as a Landcare tax benefit).

The Victorian Landcare Grants are provided through 10 Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) to “on-ground works that deliver on local, regional and State priorities, capacity building activities for land stewardship and on-ground change, projects that promote innovation through experimental trials and pilot programs, start-up funding (for new groups & networks) and maintenance grants to ensure a strong Landcare base across the State, and opportunities to promote Landcare and increase membership and volunteer numbers” [13].

On the other hand, the delivery of the National Landcare Program Regional Funding, which is available only to the 56 regional natural resource management organizations across Australia, “should be designed to maintain or build upon current engagement in landcare and practice change activities, while increasing the engagement and participation rates in natural resource management and sustainable agricultural activities of a wide variety of groups” with of the stipulation that at a “minimum 20 per cent of their annual regional allocation [should go] to small, on ground projects and related activities that are delivered by, or directly engage with, the local landcare community” [14]. At the national level, specific landholders with approved land management plans, who “incur capital expenditure on a landcare operation” such as “exterminating”, “animal pests from the land” and “combating land degradation other than by the use of fences”, can claim a tax deduction [15], [16].

3.2.3 Technical Support

With regard to technical support, in the state of Victoria, the State Government of Victoria invests in what are called Regional Landcare Coordinators. There is one based in each region in Victoria. Likewise, the federal government invests in what are called Regional Landcare Facilitators, with one based in each of 56 natural resource management organizations across Australia.

Regional Landcare Coordinators facilitate “communication through newsletters and through the Victorian Landcare Gateway”, “conduct annual regional forum”, “assist with funding”, “managing

the annual Victorian Landcare Grants program”, and “represent the region’s interests at the state level” (based on an interview with staff members at Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, 24 March 2014).

Regional Landcare Facilitators assist Landcare and other community groups in seeking funding, membership, and resources for natural resource management activities, for the development, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of regional plans, and for building and strengthening partnership between Landcare, community, grower groups, industry groups and each CMA (based on an interview with staff members at Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, 24 March 2014).

3.2.4 Motivational Support

With regard to motivational support, the State Government of Victoria provides Victorian Landcare Awards, and the federal government provides States & Territory Landcare Awards and National Landcare Awards.

State & Territory Landcare Awards, which include Victorian Landcare Awards, are held every two years “to acknowledge the success and achievements of community Landcarers, groups, networks, and organizations who have been working to protect and restore our environment” and the winners of some national awards categories “will go on to represent their state or territory” at the National Landcare Awards which are held following the State & Territory Landcare Awards [17]. In these Awards, there are categories such as “individual Landcarer Award”, “Landcare Facilitator or Coordinator Award”, and “Qantas Landcare Innovative Community Group Award” [18] which are sponsored by governments, private companies, and other organizations [19].

3.3 How the Institutions and the other Forms of Support by Governments Work in-field?

3.3.1 Making Farms Sustainable and Better Environment for Farmers

Through participation in an event held at a member’s farm of one Landcare group in Drouin South, it has been found that grants, volunteers, and staff have, through Landcare, been supporting the farmer in carrying out more sustainable farming practices and other farmers have also used this as a point of reference.

According to the document distributed to the participants at the event, the member who is the owner of the farm where the event was held “started to planting indigenous plants on his property in the late 80s... He initially started by fencing off and planting the steep embankment at the back of the

property where small landslips were occurring". He "has been involved in Landcare since the 1980s and is an inaugural committee member of Lardner and District Landcare Group. He has hosted and supported many Landcare plantings and field days on his property and has inspired others to also become involved." He "believes the farm is a better environment now for his family to live and work. Some of the benefits to the farm" that he "has observed include; more shade for cows resulting in less stressed cows and improved milk quality, increased production, improved cow condition, and better quality of pastures. He believes that their farm is more drought resilient and observed that during the height of the drought his farm had a tinge of green whereas other areas were brown." (based on documentation entitled *Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices Field day - Drouin Sth*).

At the event he gave a presentation on his farm's history and what he has done to make its environment better and showed the participants around his farm (See Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 One Landcare group member is showing his farm to the participants of the event (at Drouin South on 18 March 2014).

According to the documentation distributed, the event was a project launch event. The project, entitled "Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices in Western Port, Port Phillip and Yarra catchment" is "managed by the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network and supported by Port Phillip & Western CMA through funding from the Australian Government". The "aim of this project is to work with farmers from all enterprises to promote and support the uptake of sustainable farming practices. Landcare staff will primarily deliver the project but we will utilise the services of farm consultants, agronomists, DEPI and soil scientists when required."

3.3.2 A Bushfire Recovery Project as a Model Restoration

Through visiting and through interviews with the members of one Landcare network in Flowerdale, it has been found that, through Landcare, the grants, volunteers, and staff have been supporting the landowners and local community in the Murrindindi Shire and Mitchell Shire with rebuilding and rehabilitating the local environment on private properties that were destroyed by the bush-fire in 2009, known as the Black Saturday Bushfire.

Based on interviews with the members of one Landcare network which has been carrying out a project for achieving bushfire recovery, and also according to the documentation provided by them, after the Black Saturday bushfire, the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network (UGLN) "recognised that recovery, support, direction needed to happen to assist landholders". The network started a project with support from the Goulburn Broken CMA and a program of the federal government for "developing a community driven fire recovery program operating within the fire affected areas of the upper Goulburn catchment". In the recovery project, "soil retention", "revegetation", "implementation of threatened species action plans", etc., were the topics to be considered, and in the implementation of the project, the activities required were assessments of burnt and non-burnt resources, "seed collection", fencing, coordination of "volunteer and paid labour", "management of finances from government coffers", etc. Volunteers from private companies, public sectors, schools, and other organisations have joined field days of tree plantings, building nest boxes for birds and animals, or supplying seedlings for plantings.

According to the members of the network interviewed and the documentation provided by them, the volunteers have supported the network continuously since the Black Saturday Bushfire of 2009, and the network has a wide range of achievements such as a "weed ID & control workshop for landholders", "revegetation" (See Fig. 2) and coordination of "remnant vegetation surveys", "harnessing volunteer labour [to] remove burnt fences, [and] build new ones", "seed collection", the purchase of a trailer and protective gear, and "communication; media release, calendar of events, website, brochures, pamphlets, branding, logos". The process and achievements of the project were passed on to Landcare Queensland "after floods to help them with restoration using UGLN model" (based on an interview with members of Upper Goulburn Landcare Network at Flowerdale, 19 March 2014).

Two examples of institutional and the other forms of support by governments operate in-field in the previous section show that they promote the sustainability of both farms and farming through encouraging voluntary activities by farmers and through promoting recovery from natural disasters

by supporting community driven projects.



Fig. 2 Property of a Landcare group's member where the fire recovery project has been carried out (at Strath Creek on 5 September 2012).

3.3.3 Discussion on the Nature of Partnership between Citizen's Community Groups and Governments in Landcare Movement

This shows that institutional and other forms of support by governments work in-field to respect for the voluntary and autonomous nature of the local groups/networks and their activities.

The possible benefits of this institutional support, and of the other forms of support from governments are the following: the grants from governments are allocated to projects proposed by local groups or networks or regional natural resource management organisations who know what the local or regional environment and people need in each area. Therefore, the money can be used effectively for local or regional priorities: technical support provided through Regional Landcare Coordinators and Regional Landcare Facilitators to local groups and networks help the groups and networks to be sustainable. Choosing awardees and celebrating awards from the states and from the nation encourage diversity which increases the chance of cross-reference among local groups and networks. Delivery systems of information on the internet which promote interaction among individuals, local groups, and networks make it easier for farmers in rural areas isolated from towns to access related information and to join specific local groups or networks.

4. CONCLUSION

The partnership between citizen's community groups and governments in the Landcare movement in Australia has been found to include respect for the voluntary and autonomous nature of the local groups/networks and their activities, which enables to keep them independent from each other without

indifference. It has been also found that this nature has been realized in the informational, financial, technical, and motivational institutions and other supports from the governments across the state and the nation.

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