

Bridging Role Gaps

Abbreviations

OiB: Odling i Balans

Eider example: the Weidelandschaft Eidertal project

Single letters H, T, J, B refer to the interviewee

4.4.3 Bridging Role Gaps

In the introduction, problems regarding the traditional roles of stakeholder groups was outlined. As mentioned, much of the literature identifies interfaces between stakeholder groups as “gaps” needing to be bridged by individuals or organisations taking on roles that bridge these gaps (Rammert 2012; Janse & Konijnendijk 2007; Uetake et al. 2013; Castella et al. 2007; Davies & White 2012; Welp et al. 2006; Benn et al. 2009; Robinson et al. 2006; Reed 2008; McNeil et al. 2006; Harris & Lyon 2013; Janse 2008). The importance of bridging these gaps was further highlighted by the results of this study, as supported by the literature.

The bridging of role gaps, especially with a *communicator* role (which encompasses bridges between professional cultures, translating, mediating, facilitating communication, networking and knowledge brokering) by either an individual, organisation or role redefinition of an existing stakeholder group, will immediately lessen or eliminate the language barrier, scientific cultural differences, strengthen relations, lessen role problems and lessen policy and legislation problems (the theme problems). The individual, organisation or stakeholder group in the role of *communicator* needs to have an understanding of all professional cultures and professional languages involved, good access to information and good general communication skills. Therefore it is best if they come from an interdisciplinary background. There is a possibility that there should be two different *communicator* roles; one bridging the gap between the scientific community and other stakeholders and one bridging the gap between policy-makers and administrators and other stakeholders, this is because a strong background in both sectors is rare. As well as influencing theme problems, this will also positively affect condition and process codes which are important, such as promoting trust,



understanding, knowledge base, awareness and empowerment, and lessening misconceptions, misunderstandings, conflicts etc.

The code associated with this suggestion is *role gaps (mediator, translator, bridge etc.) and filling of traditional role gaps*, which occurs under the theme *traditional role problems*. This code and suggestion, being associated with bridging gaps between professional cultures with a communicator role, has the potential to lessen all kinds of communication problems associated with *professional cultural differences*.

Bridging Role Gaps in Examples

OiB itself acts as a bridging organisation, and takes on this role of *communicator* as stated by H and by the WWF Baltic Sea farmer of the year award 2010 (WWF 2010). The farmer advisory boards have also taken on the role of a bridging organisation, brokering knowledge to non-member farmers.

In J's case the Latvian Farmers' Parliament provided individuals (Zanda Kruklite and Maira Dzelzkaleja) who were placed in communicator roles, translating scientific research into practically implementable terms. Other than this, there was no mention of any roles bridging the gaps between stakeholders; however, as the communication in Latvia is in a state of constant development this may be arising. There may even be the possibility that J himself is becoming a bridge and an information source for Latvian farmers who are interested in implementing agri-environmental measures, and that the Latvian Farmers' Parliament are taking up this role as well.

Within the Eider example B, her colleague from the State Agency and an individual from the WBV worked in *communicator* roles bridging the gaps between stakeholder groups. B specifically was well suited for this due to her diverse and interdisciplinary background, which provided her with a basis of common ground with all the stakeholder groups involved, from which to build trust and strong relationships. B distributed information, raised awareness of opportunities and environmental issues, mediated, facilitated, translated and set up two-way



communication. She did this between all stakeholder groups, and highlights the need for more people in these bridging roles who “understand the practical sides of projects, know how to make connections and know how to build bridges.”

Excerpts from:

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