

Natural Resources Management at the Local Level: Social Capital and Social Power in Local Beneficiaries' Network

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Environmental problems are typically complex, uncertain, and multi-scale and affect multiple actors and agencies. This demands transparent decision-making that is flexible to changing circumstances, and embraces a diversity of knowledge and values. To achieve this, stakeholder participation is increasingly being sought and embedded into environmental decision-making processes, from local to international scales. Widespread acceptance and promotion of participation has partly been driven by increasing public scepticism about science, increasing knowledge and interest in environmental decisions and ongoing policy trends that emphasize sustainable development and partnership working. In order to co-management of natural resources in rural areas, it is necessary to consider rangeland utilizers. Co-management, or the joint management of the commons, is often formulated in terms of some arrangement of power sharing between the State and a community of resource users. In reality, there often are multiple local interests and multiple

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government agencies at play, and co-management can hardly be understood as the interaction of a unitary State and a homogeneous community. Typically, co-management of common-pool resources, such as fisheries and forests, are depicted as some kind of power-sharing arrangement between the State and a community of resource users. This picture is based on an ideal image of the State as some kind of monolithic structure, and neglects the fact that not only communities, but also the State itself has many faces. By over-emphasizing the formal aspect of such power sharing arrangement, one might run the risk of disregarding the functional side of co-management which should be understood as a continuous problem-solving process. This is also necessary to pay attention to social capital of local stakeholders.

Methodology

Social capital is often suggested as having a beneficial effect on the capacity of individuals to organize them effectively, and together with leadership, is often seen as crucial for the initiation and maintenance of environmental conservation and management at the community level. Today, social network analysis method could solve problems and challenges in this case for managers and planners of natural resources and characterize mathematical and quantitative indices. Recent social network studies have begun to contribute a greater understanding of how resource governance systems and their composite institutions function, and why some are more successful than others. Social networks are comprised of actors who are tied to one another through socially meaningful relations. These relations can then be analyzed for structural patterns that emerge among these actors. Thus, an analyst of social networks looks beyond attributes of individuals to also examine the relations among actors, how actors are positioned within a network, and how relations are structured into overall network patterns. Both the social network and resource management literature discuss ways in which networks influence individual actors and groups.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, main aim is determine dimensions of social capital such as trust, cooperation and social cohesion among stakeholders in Kalate Rudbar in Damghan

region, called Gajin Dasht. In this customary area 33 utilizers use rangelands under co-license. First, target groups have identified according to field works and talks. Then, we have used questionnaires and produced matrixes and analyzed it in software. Indices in macro and micro levels have analyzed. According to these indices, social cohesion, sustainability of network and power of every person have characterized. The amount of social cohesion among stakeholders in Gajin Dasht is medium; therefore, social capital is also medium. Network sustainability is also medium and this is necessary to improve trust and collaboration. Some persons had more scores compare to others according to centrality degree and these could have better social power and controlling power. These should be local leaders for co-management of rangelands and could develop trust through the network and increase social capital. Lack of key actors, co-management will not success. Centrality shows topology of each actor in network. Based to this research, network analysis could be a good method for natural resources management to gain social-ecological sustainability. In this area, for implementation of rangeland co-management should be improved social cohesion, trust and social capital among users because social capital is a main factor in the level successful of co-management plan. Social capital can be a fundamental indicator for sustainable rural development. We have discussed the relation between social network structure and function in natural resource management. We have furthermore highlighted network measures used to quantify structures in social networks and linked these to features identified as important in enhancing adaptive management of ecosystems. Therefore, this research indicates main indicators in the macro and micro levels of network that have intensive relation to the level successful of natural resources co-management.

Keywords: Rangeland co-management, Social network analysis, Network sustainability, Social capital, Gajin Dasht.

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