Landcare groups in Germany – Rural governance or implementation tool?

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Background

LandscapePartners project

www.macaulay.ac.uk/LandscapePartners

"The contribution of multi-stakeholder partnerships to sustainable landscape management"

- 2010-2012

- Funded through EU Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship

- Case studies: Germany, Netherlands, UK, Austria

What are Landcare groups?

- Local/sub-regional groups aiming at sustainable management of nature and landscape in rural areas (but towns often and cities sometimes included)

- Typically composed of people representing nature conservation, agriculture and local government

- Individuals and representatives

- Between 7 and 2000 members (depending on whether members of member organisations are counted individually), averaging 150, median 50

- Formed bottom-up, but some 'government-sponsored'

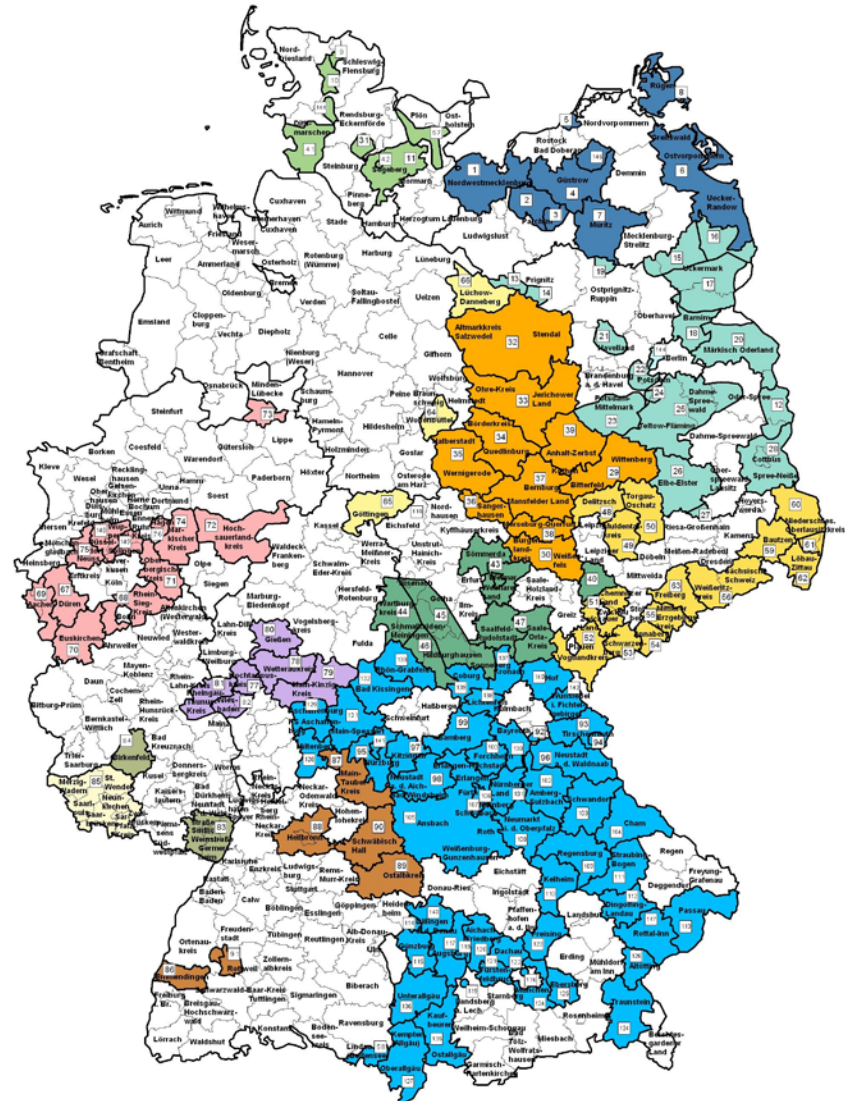- Focussed on coordinating and implementing activities rather than planning

Distribution

Trend since 2007:

- new groups in Bayern, Baden-Wurttemberg, Schleswig-Holstein

- Group dissolved in Rheinland-Pfalz; some mergers

Landschaftspflegeverbände und vergleichbare Organisationen in Deutschland
Stand: Mai 2011

Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege (DVL) e.V.
Feuchtwanger Str. 38, 91522 Ansbach
Tel: 0981/4653-3540, Fax -3550
eMail: info@lpv.de, Internet: www.landschaftspflegeverband.de

History

- First groups formed in 1985/6 in Mittelfranken and Kelheim, Bavaria

- Driven by individuals (J. Göppel), conflicts between farmers and conservationists, structural change in agriculture, loss of habitats

- Spread to rest of West Germany in late 80s and East Germany in early 90s

- No national program, scattered state support

- Umbrella organisation 1993 – Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege DVL

Aims and objectives

Landscape management and sustainable rural development

1. manage natural resources on a sustainable basis in all cultural landscapes

2. develop the connections between different habitats

3. encourage endogenous regional development and environmentally friendly land use by promoting regional specialties and place identity

4. provide income to farmers through seeking EU and state grants for landscape maintenance

5. provide support to farmers in marketing their regional products (www.lpv.de; www.goeppel.de/landschaftspflege)

Activities

- Management of hedgerows and meadows for habitat protection of threatened species

- Preservation of traditional orchards, drystone walls

- Marketing of regional products, village festivals

- Managing wetlands, watercourses, resnagging (WFD)

- Management of Natura 2000 sites

- Coordination of compensation measures for roads, housing ect.

- Soil conservation

- Education and awareness-raising

Administrative context

National

State (Bundesland)

District (region)

Municipality

Landcare group
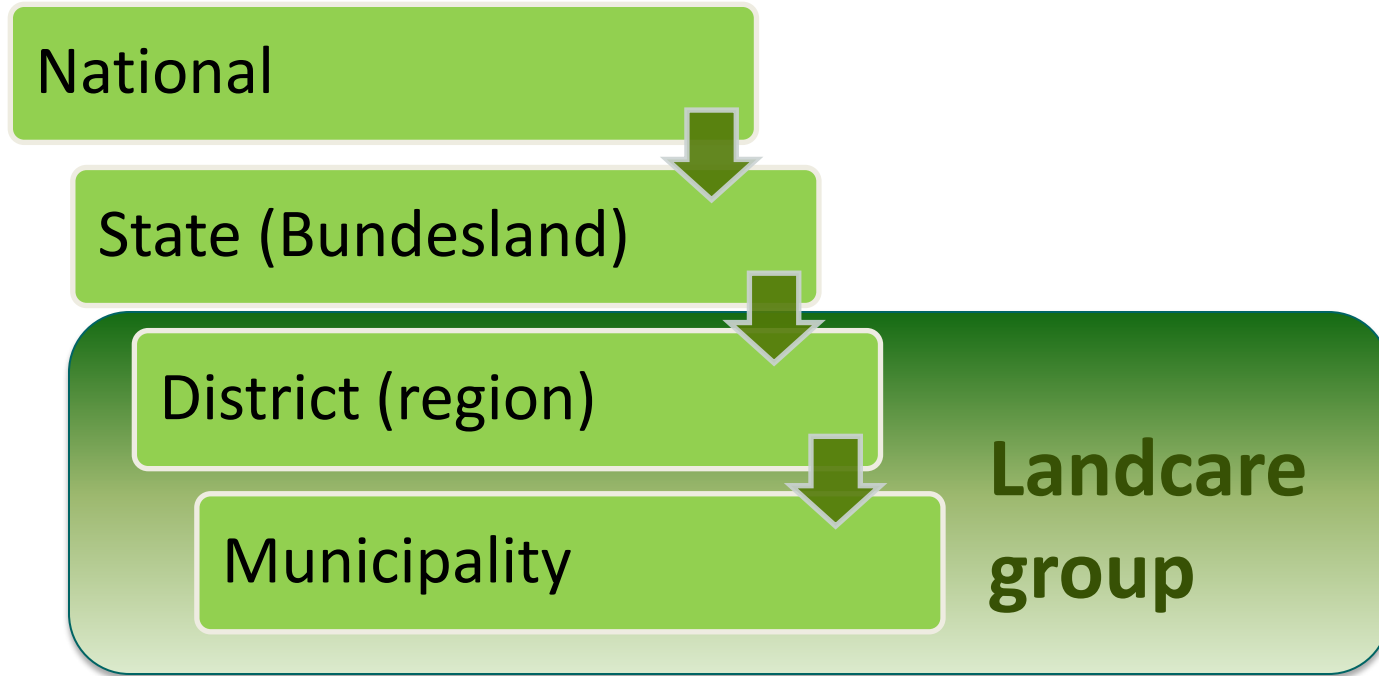
- District and municipality reforms: merging into larger administrative units

- Reshuffling of departmental remits and responsibilities

- State sees responsibility with the District; while District holds State responsible; municipalities budget vary greatly
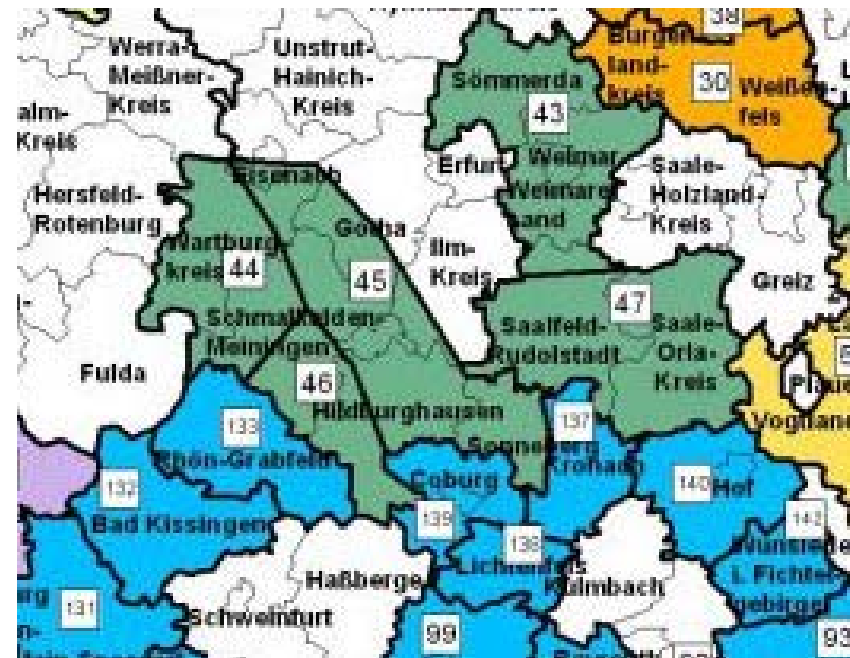
Administrative context

Landcare groups may

- Combine only some of the municipalities which form a 'merged municipality'

- Combine municipalities with very different interests within a district (lowland – upland)

- Stretch across administrative boundaries because they align with natural boundaries

But never across state boundaries

Rural governance or implementation tool

- Governance: "The totality of interactions, in which government, public bodies, private sector and civil society participate, aiming at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities" (Meuleman 2008)

- 'Good governance' assumes joint responsibility, decision making and coordination processes (network governance)

- Implementation of policy (state programmes and strategies)

- Implementation tools used by agencies to achieve public sector goals

Theoretical conceptualisation
Governance - - - Implementation

- Two way perspective

- Bottom-up and top-down

- Longer term (ongoing process)

- About: better information flows, monitoring, coordinated management

- Empowerment, shared responsibility

- One way perspective

- Top-down

- Shorter term (once implemented, groups no longer needed)

- About: 'using' groups to implement policy, directing and prescribing

- Government knows best

Practical findings

Governance   - - -   Implementation

Governance

- Groups mostly self-organised

- Some groups lobby (e.g. for specific funding)

- Members wear different hats

- Coordination of land management, contiguous management

- Bring together different sectors and groups of society

- Often hierarchical governance, less often network governance

Implementation

- Self-image of groups as 'service provider'

- Activities based on existing plans and programmes

- Drawing heavily on funding schemes

- Agencies off-loading tasks, often without sufficient funds and decision making power

- Making use of the 'volunteer resource'

- Often determined by administrative boundaries

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Conclusion

- Some cases are examples of 'good' rural governance

  ▶ Group brings stakeholders together, identifies common interest, develops ideas, brings implementation underway

  ▶ Monitoring and feedback

- In others, groups are merely implementation tool

  ▶ Group implements activities as defined by district

  ▶ Group acts as advisor on agri-environment schemes without adding value through cooperation

- Good (network) governance requires groups with high level of social and human capital, intrinsically motivated individuals and open-minded, innovative governments