“The Sea Has No Boundaries”: Collaboration and Communication Between Actors in Coastal Planning on the Swedish West Coast

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INTRODUCTION

Confronted with the challenges of coordinating spatial planning of the Swedish West Coast, regional actors have initiated a project to increase the degree of collaboration between societal actors in coastal planning.¹ The project was initiated by regional organizations, but planners, business

¹The County Administrative Board (CAB) of Västra Götaland, the Västra Götaland Regional Council (VGR), the Gothenburg Region (GR), and Business Region Gothenburg (BRG).

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developers, and environmental managers working in eight coastal municipalities participated, as well as representatives from interest organizations. The project, which lasted from 2016 to 2019, was aimed at dealing with the main problems and constraints facing the sustainable development of coastal and marine areas, and strengthening cooperation and establishing common objectives regarding the planning of a coastal zone that includes the geographical area of the involved municipalities.²

In the context of this chapter, this collaborative project is studied as an example of environmental communication within and between organizations. The broad and complex set of socio-environmental challenges facing society requires awareness of the processes of environmental communication; here, the anthropological tradition of interpretation and of stressing how communication is “embedded in social institutions, local practices and experiences and is understood and judged in terms of emic, localized, collectively defined values and concerns” (Boholm, 2015, p. 158) can make a significant contribution.

This chapter focuses on environmental communication as a continuous interaction between actors in a specific institutional setting. Such collaborations and communication are not always straightforward, nor consensus-driven or devoid of conflicts, since the different actors have their own interests and perspectives. In this chapter, we consider the complexities associated with inter-agency dialogue processes and the difficulties involved in developing and coming to agreements about plans conceived to cope with environmental issues.

Our study draws on the idea that collaborative efforts and dialogue are concerted by fortuitous and lived practices and affected by contextual value-driven circumstances, such as sector-specific tools, regulations and policies, resources, and norms (c.f., Hammond & Brandt, 2004; Shore

²The project covers the geographical area of the following municipalities on the Swedish West Coast: Uddevalla, Orust, Tjörn, Stenungsund, Kungälv, Öckerö, Göteborg, and Kungälv.

et al., 2011), which, we argue, need to be acknowledged to reach a more profound and critical understanding of communication as an institutionalized practice. Therefore, we focus on the collaborative process as a shared space for human experience, imagination, and significance. With this as our departure point, we propose that any critical analysis of collaborative environmental communication must take the framework of institutional(ized) roles and responsibilities in consideration as it creates the framework in which communication takes place (Sjölander-Lindqvist, 2015; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020).

We explore the communication that is taking place as an ongoing negotiation of interests and responsibilities. We utilize the concept of “boundary work” (Gieryn, 1983, 1999) in our exploration of the multidimensional character of communicative practices and contents as they unfolded in the project. We followed the project *Inter-Municipal Coastal Zone Planning: In the Gothenburg Region, Orust och Uddevalla* for a year and a half to explore how the involved actors understood the objectives of the collaboration and to identify the driving forces and obstacles for fruitful cooperation, communication, and goal completion. Through interviews and by participating in meetings and discussion sessions, we gained insight into how the project was situated within the institutional logics of the involved actors’ organizations, explored how they understood the objectives of the collaboration, and identified the driving forces and obstacles for fruitful cooperation and communication between the concerned actors.

Through data collection, which included approximately 50 hours of participant observations in meetings, 13 formal recorded in-depth interviews with people associated with the project, informal conversation, as well as documentation from the project available on the webpage of the Gothenburg Region (GR), we captured how the project participants made sense of the project and the meanings attached to the particularities and circumstances of the collaboration. Environmental communication in this regard is studied from an anthropological perspective, highlighting the added value of doing participant observations and focusing on how emic models of explanations are (hierarchically) structured according to institutional roles and responsibilities of the addressees of the communication. This study demonstrates that some aspects of a collaborative project only become possible to observe if one studies it for a longer duration, becoming a natural element in the environment and getting to know the participants.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Environmental communication does not only take place between governmental bodies, business companies, and the public. There is also a continuous dialogue within and between government authorities, regional and municipal bodies, and other stakeholder organizations (e.g., Larsson et al., 2019; Sjölander-Lindqvist, 2015). This communication is situated within the institutional logics of involved organizations, and actors will follow their institutional logic and make decisions accordingly (Luhmann, 1989). However, institutionalized attitudes or patterns of behavior do not always follow a rationale that makes sense in relation to specifically defined goals within the organization. Attitudes and patterns of behavior might also be dependent on institutional praxis and be based on contingent factors such as influential individuals within the organization and an organizational culture that has developed and become institutionalized over time. A focus on the processes and the ongoing negotiations of meaning is essential for understanding the complex “nature” of communication within an institutional setting.

Differences in perspectives and conflicts between societal actors can relate to certain specific issues, but it can also connect to knowledge claims and disputes over areas of responsibility between societal bodies (Boholm & Larsson, 2019; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). These conflicts and negotiations can be described as *boundary work* in Gieryn's (1983) wording. *Boundary work* is a concept initially used to describe how divergent knowledge claims are made and negotiated between different scientific fields (Gieryn, 1983, 1999), but the concept has also been utilized to analyze how organizations negotiate the scope of their organizational responsibilities and knowledge claims (e.g., Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). From such a perspective, organizations or subdivisions of organizations might compete over claims to responsibilities and jurisdictions with a particular issue or domain as well as the authority to formulate the problem, but they might also try to push away such responsibilities.

Diverging organizational logics and perspectives of the involved actors (i.e., values, interpretative schemata, and assumptions) become particularly evident during a reorganization, or when actors are to collaborate over established institutional boundaries. The inter-municipal project discussed in this chapter is, therefore, a telling example that we can use to discuss the complexities associated with inter-agency collaboration and communication.

THE RATIONALE FOR THE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

A frequently touted phrase in interviews with participants in the project and the documentation of the collaborative project on coastal planning and management is that *the sea has no boundaries*. This truism is understood as an imperative for collaboration over administrative and geographical boundaries as regarding the planning and management of the sea and the coastal zone.³ Coming as a researcher from the outside, it is not easy to understand why the sea, in contrast to land, is considered to be without borders or boundaries, or for that matter why this is a call for cross-sectoral collaboration—but let us leave this question aside and take a step back.

In Sweden, municipalities have a far-reaching responsibility for planning and granting building permits within their geographical borders (referred to as “the plan monopoly”). The Swedish Code of Statutes 2010:900 stipulates that each municipality must have an updated comprehensive spatial plan covering the entire geographical area of the municipality. It should reflect the opinion of the political majority and be ratified by the municipal council. The spatial plan is not a binding document, but should guide decisions on how land and water areas should be used and managed, and how the built environment can be used, developed, or preserved. For the coastal municipalities, this also includes the responsibility of establishing maritime spatial plans up to 12 nautical miles from the baseline⁴ (these plans are also sometimes referred to as “blue comprehensive plans”⁵).

More often than not, coastal municipalities lack comprehensive maritime spatial plans; this can be explained by both a lack of political interest (reflecting a lack of interest among the inhabitants) and a lack of resources for doing this work, especially within the smaller municipalities. A respondent from one of the regional organizations said in an interview, “The sea is a low priority area, reflecting a limited interest in these issues among the

³ For example, “The boundless character of the Sea calls for a holistic view stressing collaboration over different sectors as well as administrative and geographical boundaries” (Förstudie mellankommunal kustplanering i Göteborgsregionen, Orust och Uddevalla <https://goteborgsregionen.se/download/18.4e85091914e1a80913d5e985/1435055444244/Remissversion+-+Mellankommunal+kustplanering+i+G%C3%B6teborgsregionen%2C+Orust+och+Uddevalla.pdf>). All translations from Swedish to English are by the first author of this chapter unless otherwise noted.

⁴ The baseline is the line outside the islands.

⁵ Note that this is not a formal legal term.

majority in the municipalities. That makes it difficult to spend resources on this.” Although the municipalities have had the authority and responsibility to develop the comprehensive blue plans, very few municipalities have put any effort into this since the Swedish Code of Statutes came into force in 1987.⁶ In 2010, only 4 out of 84 Swedish coastal municipalities had such plans. Referring to the lack of maritime regulation and planning, one informant said that “the sea is the last wild west.”

In the early 2010s, a dialogue regarding the planning of the coastal area between regional actors was initiated, including the County Administrative Board (CAB) of Västra Götaland, the Västra Götaland Regional Council (VGR), the Gothenburg Region (GR), and Business Region Gothenburg (BRG). A jointly conducted pre-study, carried out in 2014–2015, identified the need for collaborative planning efforts and a need to coordinate the national, regional, and municipal responsibilities for the sea.⁷ The preliminary study proposed a collaborative project involving the six coastal municipalities within the Gothenburg Region, complemented by the two municipalities Uddevalla and Orust. One model for this collaborative project was a similar collaborative project conducted at an earlier time by the coastal municipalities in northern Bohuslän, a nearby West Coast province. The preliminary study formulated a “proposal on how future in-depth cooperation on inter-municipal coastal planning can be developed, concerning priority thematic areas.” This study created the guidelines for the project discussed in this chapter.

The project did not materialize in a political vacuum; the involved actors relate this project to ongoing national planning for the future exploitation of Swedish marine resources, and as an EU member state, Sweden is obliged under the MSP Directive to develop a national maritime spatial plan by March 31, 2021, at the latest.⁸ The collaboration project is also related to a trend in political governance stressing collaborative efforts in the resource management as a desirable, or even essential, way of ensuring sustainability when addressing environmental challenges (Hayes & Persha, 2010). It is, in general, assumed that increased participation and collaboration will lead to increased legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability (Emerson et al., 2012). Hence, the deliberative approach

⁶ *Plan och bygglagen* first came into being in 1987 and was replaced by the current Swedish Code of Statutes in 2011.

⁷ There is a geographical overlap between the municipal and national plans for the sea.

⁸ <https://www.msp-platform.eu/msp-eu/introduction-msp>

to governance is in contemporary political and academic discourse touted to provide more socially efficient and robust decisions (e.g., Barber, 1984; Emerson et al., 2012; Hansson-Forman et al., 2018). Based on the normative ideals of shared responsibility and mutual learning, this form of governance proves useful in handling conflicting goals and seeking acceptable and legitimate outcomes of decision making (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999).

Furthermore, interaction across sectors or pooling of knowledge spheres can promote the development of new knowledge (Mårald et al., 2015) which may also be more sensitive to the given context and to the specificities of the place (Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2014). Our case for interrogation reveals how the project is rationalized against the contemporary currency of a collaborative norm for policy work by the inclusion of not only municipal actors but also several other societal stakeholders.

THE ORGANIZATION AND THE EXPLICIT OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

It was decided at an early stage that the GR⁹ was going to host the project. Still, the project was funded by the VGR, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (funds distributed through the CAB), BRG (through in-kind), as well as by the participating municipalities.¹⁰ The project lasted between 2016 and 2019. The participants from the municipalities were civil servants who worked with environmental issues, planning, and business development. In addition to the organizations mentioned earlier, various interest organizations were also actively involved in the project.¹¹

The explicit aim of the project was to establish intensified collaboration between municipalities, authorities, and other relevant actors regarding social, cultural, and environmental planning. In other words, it aimed at including both horizontal collaboration (between municipalities) and vertical collaboration (between the municipalities and the regional actors) across administrative and geographical boundaries. The primary outcome of the project was to deliver a “structural picture” (*strukturbild*) with joint

⁹The GR is a cooperative organization uniting some 13 municipalities in western Sweden (6 of these municipalities border the sea).

¹⁰The participating municipalities are listed in Footnote 1.

¹¹Västarvet, Väst kuststiftelsen, Maritima klustret, 8 Fjordar, Bohusläns skärgårdsråd, Turistrådet Västsverige, Vattenrådet för Bohuskusten, Göta Älvs Vattenråd.

agreements on how the coastal zone should be developed and preserved sustainably. This agreement was to be ratified in the GR Council and the municipality executive boards or municipality councils in each participating municipality.¹² This meant that the document, although not legally binding, was expected to have some political weight. Another expected outcome was a knowledge platform to assist the municipalities' spatial planning. This was to be presented in a joint digital GIS¹³ platform that could provide relevant planning information such as the location of green areas, nature reserves, and other infrastructure.¹⁴ This information, to be included in the GIS database, was to be collected from the individual municipalities, government authorities, and interest organizations. A consultancy agency was also hired to produce three reports on (i) accessibility to the coast, (ii) marinas, and (iii) production of energy at sea. Information from these reports was to feed into both the structure plan and the GIS database.

Project leaders from the GR ran the project in dialogue with a strategic leadership group comprising representatives from the CAB of Västra Götaland, VGR, BRG, and GR. Throughout the project, there were joint meetings with all participants, but most of the work was carried out in four working groups: *Structure*, *Utilization of the Sea*, *Experiences*, and *Environment*.¹⁵ These groups had monthly meetings for the initial two years of the project and included civil servants representing the involved municipalities (working in planning, environment, and business development), representatives from the GR, and participants from other interest and agency organizations operating in the coastal zone. Occasionally, the CAB and VGR participated in the meetings to discuss particular issues.

The working groups produced preliminary reports on their topic. Although the topics for the working groups had been defined, they had a large degree of autonomy and flexibility in dealing with the topics and deciding what to include in their reports. For example, the *Experience* working group added tourism and recreation to their list of topics although

¹²This varies among the involved municipalities.

¹³Geographic Information System.

¹⁴Now available online at <http://karta.goteborgsregionen.se/>

¹⁵Initially the project identified nine themes to work with: (1) aquaculture and fisheries, (2) access to the coast, (3) boating, (4) transport infrastructure, (5) visitor industry, (6) energy production at sea, (7) environmental state of the sea, (8) drilling sites, and (9) principles of construction. For practical purposes, these themes were merged into four working groups.

it was not included in the initial plan. The working groups compiled existing documentation and identified needs or knowledge gaps within their area of responsibility—information that could feed into the GIS platform. The working groups also invited external lecturers from the different interest organizations, for example, to support the building of knowledge and increase the participants’ competence but also to obtain information that could feed into the reports to be produced by the groups. Each group presented the results in the form of a preliminary report that would feed into the final structural picture.

When the working groups were ready with their preliminary reports, an operational group was formed. It was led by the project manager from the GR and included representatives from each working group. The operational group produced the structural picture from the reports in each working group and the material provided by the consultancy agency; they did this in dialogue with the strategic management group as well as with the politicians in the municipalities.

THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INVOLVED STAKEHOLDERS

From the perspective of the participating municipalities, the project was relevant to the everyday work of the involved departments as well as to their planning responsibility. Matters related to the sea are especially relevant to the Environment Department, the Planning Department, and the Department for Business Development. However, there are significant differences between what topics are of relevance to the involved municipalities. For example, the municipality of Kungälv has problems with the protection of eelgrass meadows, for Uddevalla the issue of the harbor is important, and for Orust aquaculture and fishing is of the essence. The VGR and BRG are mainly involved in issues concerning business development when it comes to issues related to coastal planning. The CAB has an interest in development as well as environmental protection, and they stressed that they want to contribute to the project’s implementation with their knowledge and established contact network. The other interest organizations were involved insofar as it related to their specific roles, including business development, environmental protection, and cultural heritage preservation.

Although the concerned actors had different perspectives and different roles, there was a general understanding among the participants that some matters needed to be coordinated between the municipalities as well as between the regional actors. A civil servant working with business development in one of the municipalities said in an interview:

For example, we must coordinate marine aquacultures, and shipping must be discussed with our neighboring municipalities [...] It doesn't work if [our municipality] is just looking at our own problems [...], so I think it's obvious that we need to collaborate and coordinate the work between the municipalities.

Areas considered essential to collaborate on included public transportation, environmental pollution, construction of marinas, and shipping. In fact, all participants, to some degree, stressed the benefits of joint planning and collaboration.

The civil servants working in the municipalities' planning departments particularly highlighted the benefits of the project. One planner said that all the issues dealt with in the project would be used in their plans, stating:

[T]he structural picture points out sites for aquaculture, shellfish farms, and everything else, how people get to the coast, and how they use the coastal area. It'll be a basis for us to do our planning. We'll be able to see what the interests are; it's like any other planning document, really.

Primarily, the GIS platform was understood to be a useful tool in making the overview plans for the coastal areas in the municipalities. Another civil servant in a municipality stated:

The planning documentation that we have received [through the collaborative project] gives us a whole GIS product, where we can just put all the available information and copy-paste; a lot of the planning has already been done by other actors, so we can do our planning in relation to the documentation that already exists.

The civil servants from the involved municipalities saw benefits in aligning their municipal planning with the project's regional plans. However, the planning process in the municipality was not only understood to benefit from the outcome of the project, but also from the conversations and discussions in the working groups and joint meetings. One of the municipal planners said:

And of course, we talk about important issues in the different working groups, concerning how we should think about energy supply and all these issues. It will lend an increased depth to the planning documentation compared to if I had to do everything by myself.

The informants understood the group discussions and the joint meetings within the project as beneficial to their work. They deepened their understanding of the issues and the values at stake, and their ability to “see how the different interests are interconnected.” Furthermore, the collaborative project is understood as helpful in making the overview plans in the municipalities.

In addition to the benefits of the expected outcomes of the project, it is also stressed that they get to know civil servants in the other municipalities, and people within the interest organizations. A civil servant from a municipality said that it “has been incredibly valuable to get all the contacts I have got, we have met a lot of people, and widened the contact areas between municipalities.”

The element of learning was also emphasized in several interviews. For example, a civil servant said:

We have different traditions and different experiences, and I think the coastal zone project has been great in that you’ve had to listen to different municipalities [...] if you take Orust and Tjörn as examples, they have a completely different tradition with the fishing industry, compared to us in Uddevalla. But it’s important that we’re filled in on what the other municipalities are doing, so that we don’t contribute to anyone else’s problems.

One civil servant told us that he was recently hired by the municipality and that he had worked his whole life in the business sector:

So, for me [the collaborative project] has been a part of my process of understanding what my role is as a business developer [in the municipality]. I have no experience whatsoever with comprehensive planning; all these processes were completely new to me.

In other words, he understood the project as a way of understanding the public sector better. Another civil servant from a municipality stressed that this learning process was more important than the actual outcome of the project:

For my part, I've learned a whole lot of things that I wasn't aware of before thanks to these networks with other people who are professionals in their fields. Eelgrass meadows are one example, marinas, ferries, aquaculture, and I really got to learn a great deal, things that might also be beneficial to [...] municipal planning in the future.

As we have seen, the benefits of the project were formulated as aligned with the project's overtly formulated goal, but there were also benefits in terms of learning and networking.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Just as there was a shared understanding of the benefits of the project, the informants also brought up difficulties in making joint agreements. There were strong opinions and diverging interests regarding how the coast and the sea should be utilized, and there were also some conflicting interests and values at stake. For example, renewable energy solutions such as off-shore wind farms might infringe on the space of other interests such as the military or ship traffic. Hence, the development of one sector may create problems in another sector. Most conflicts discussed in the collaborative project related to environmental protection versus some other perceived benefit such as exploitation of new land or business development. An example of one such conflict is when the representative from BRG in a joint meeting raised his concern that increased protection for the eelgrass meadows in the structural picture would heavily influence business development, saying that current regulation already provides "extremely" strong protection of the eelgrass. An agitated discussion followed this statement, in which the civil servants working with environmental issues argued that the eelgrass did not enjoy "extreme" protection, and if that had been the case it would not have decreased by 60% in recent years.

Conflicts of interest were most clearly articulated in the discussion on commercial fishing. Whereas the civil servants from the municipalities' environmental departments stressed how the fish stock and marine environment are negatively impacted by the fishing industry, the business side stressed that the fisheries constitute the fishermen's livelihood, and that this is important also for retailers and the local fish-processing industry. A vibrant fishing industry, they continued, is also an important part of attracting tourism to the area. The fisheries are also understood to be an essential aspect of the identity and cultural heritage of the coastal area in

Sweden, embedded in cultural values and the identities of many fishing societies. The disagreements mostly related to the difficulties in balancing economic, social, and ecological interests, but sometimes the conflicts were also about how to interpret information and evaluate information from different sources.

What, then, were the dividing lines between the various positions within the project? A project manager said that the initial problem was that everyone was used to thinking within the established boundaries of their organizations and that the municipalities were used to dealing with issues at the municipal level and promoting their own local interests. Nevertheless, the discussions showed that there were different positions within the municipalities. For example, two civil servants from the same municipality had entirely different views on fishing. One believed that all fishermen in Sweden should be paid salaries for the rest of their lives to discontinue fishing, while the other understood fishing as an essential part of the municipality's survival and identity. It may be needless to say that the civil servants that wanted to discontinue fishing worked in the environment department, while the person promoting the fishing industry worked in the department for business development.

OBSTACLES RELATED TO REGULATIONS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN SOCIETY

While nearly all the involved actors stressed the benefits of joint agreements, it was very difficult to come to agreements when it came down to specific issues. While these difficulties sometimes related to conflicts of interests between the involved actors, many obstacles in formulating joint goals related to existing principles for making decisions and the formal roles and responsibilities of the concerned actors. One prominent example of this is when one of the working groups wanted to coordinate the disposal of mud from dredging and propose suitable locations for such disposal sites. They discussed this issue and the criteria for suitable sites for a long time before the CAB communicated that this was not possible under current legislation.¹⁶ Disposal of mud is not permitted by Swedish

¹⁶ According to the Environmental Code (Miljöbalken), Chapter 31, Section 31, no one may dispose of mud or any other waste within Sweden's maritime territory and economic zone.

regulations. While exceptions can be made, the CAB must receive a formal application each time and cannot designate sites for disposal.

The working group did not accept this at first and decided to create their own interpretation of the existing regulation in order to find loopholes that would allow the municipality to point out what they considered as proper sites for mud disposal. After this discussion had proceeded for some time, one of the participants pointed out that none of them were legal experts and that they might not be able to draw any conclusion from their readings. Eventually, they came to the conclusion that within the project they did not have any ways to influence these decisions, which are made in each specific case, and in accordance with specific regulations and guidelines. An informant within the project said that they “[t]hought it would be possible to point out suitable places from a joint regional perspective, but you really can’t do that in this project.” This is one example of how actors in the project tried to expand the scope of their role and responsibility, while the CAB, on the other hand, policed the borders of their responsibilities and jurisdiction.

There were several obstacles within the project that related to the confusion of roles and responsibilities in society. Another example was when the working groups were to formulate the wordings of their reports. In many instances, the working groups wanted to make statements in the report that advocated further-reaching environmental protection than that stipulated by contemporary regulation. This was often influenced by the participants’ ideological standpoints. On this subject, one participant said during a meeting that “we have to look upon this as a long-term challenge. No one is speaking in the interest of nature, [...] we have to stand up and speak for interests that don’t have their own voice.” The shoreland was one area where the working group wanted to make protection stricter than existing regulations. One group also proposed that farmland should not be further exploited, motivated by the opinion that it is “unreasonable to transport food across the globe” for environmental reasons—quite contrary to contemporary politics and policies.

While a few of these formulations made it all the way into the report (e.g., the issue concerning farmland), some of the proposed wording in the preliminary reports were too strong for the politicians in the municipalities to stomach. This was especially noticeable with regard to the suggested increased protection of shoreland, which the politicians from the municipalities did not want to ratify. A liberal view of utilizing the shoreland is seen as an important aspect of making the municipality more

attractive to investment (e.g., making it possible for people to build summer houses close to the sea). In the final version of the structural picture, large changes had been made to what had been decided in the working group. The project management concluded that "[t]he visions had to be formulated very broadly for all the involved actors and municipalities to accept it."

In all these examples, the working groups tried to transcend the institutional boundaries and jurisdictions of the involved organizations, something that can be described as boundary work (as described earlier), where actors try to position themselves and extend the reach of their jurisdiction (or patrol and protect its borders). Some of these examples can be understood as resulting from a lack of knowledge about regulations and institutional responsibilities among the participants, but they can also be interpreted as active expressions of wanting to voice an opinion or trying to extend the reach of one's own jurisdiction and, in so doing, trying to expand the boundaries of one's area of responsibility.

The concept of intuitional boundaries is essential to understanding the layers of discourse in the communication within the project. When a person makes a statement in the working group, their affiliation and position within that organization is of the essence for interpreting and juxtaposing the layers of discourse. When discussing the communication in the collaborative project as boundary work between different actors, it is important to acknowledge not only existing, established actors but others as well; a temporary unit within the collaborative project like a working group (or, for that matter, the collaborative project in its entirety) can create an institution of its own, operating with its own institutional logics, especially if the project exists for a longer period of time.

While an initial problem was described by the project management as being related to how the involved actors were used to thinking within the traditional boundaries of their own municipalities and organizations, a difficulty arising later on in the project was that it was too difficult to "think inside" the framework of existing institutional boundaries (as demonstrated by the examples above). It was also confirmed in interviews that the project participants' attitudes differed from those of civil servants that did not engage in the project—so that participants in the project established joint viewpoints and joint objectives in contrast to those who did not participate in the project within the municipalities and the other organizations. Consequently, the positions within the project were not something given, but rather under continuous negotiation. Actors might side

with other actors in discussions dependent on a number of factors, and their position was not given beforehand, but depended on contingent factors such as group dynamics. So while the project aimed at transcending certain boundaries between organizations, it simultaneously created new boundaries within the organizations; this is an insight that is important to take into consideration when designing collaborative projects.

COMMUNICATION THROUGH FRICTION

Taken together, the working group spent weeks and months trying to reach agreements about things that were not possible due to current laws and a regulated division of responsibilities between societal institutions. Much work was put into the project groups, and the results were meager in terms of their outcome in the final joint agreements. To outside observers, some of these discussions seemed fruitless, and we expected the participants to be more negative toward the collaborative project and to view it as a waste of time and something that would potentially aggravate the participants and increase polarization. And furthermore, we expected that the actors would be disappointed or disillusioned when the agreed-upon solutions to the issues discussed were not possible to realize.

There were also some complaints from the participants who shared this line of reasoning. One of the planners said during a coffee break that the work to establish joint agreements was unnecessary because these visions were too difficult to integrate with her everyday work, where she had to rely on current regulation and planning documents. A civil servant argued that the collaborative project would have benefited from firmer leadership and said that a clearer framework for the collaboration and discussions should have been formulated from the very beginning of the project. Another civil servant said in an interview, "I think the work of the working groups could have been organized a little differently; I think we should have worked more with the vision and purpose of the project at the beginning to determine what we wanted to achieve within the project." Another person stressed that it should have been clearer from the beginning what was possible to do within the framework of the project.

However, the participants were remarkably patient, tolerant, and in good spirits. Also, misunderstandings and conflicts were understood as a part of the learning process. In the interviews with the CAB, they recognized the difficulties facing the project and the lack of knowledge among the participants in the municipalities, which led to conflicts over roles and

responsibilities. They did not, however, view this as an obstacle for collaboration. Rather, they claimed that these conflicts were a part of a learning process. They said that it was beneficial to let the municipalities discuss quite freely and intervene only when they saw it as necessary. Intervening in the collaborative project was something the CAB understood as allowing them to educate the municipalities and stop ideas at an early stage, making them less prone to making uninformed decisions in the future. “You can punch holes in their bubbles before they become big balloons ... you can deflate [them] slowly instead of punching a hole.” So while the municipalities saw the project as a collaboration between actors, the CAB also understood the objective of the project to be educating the municipalities and encouraging them to take on their responsibilities in issues related to planning.

From this discussion, we can see that the actors involved in a collaborative project can have intentions that diverge from its formulated goals, and that a collaborative project may have perceived benefits that are not immediately evident in its overtly defined objectives. In relation to environmental communication, it is interesting to see that what appeared as misunderstandings and conflicts was understood by some actors as a good way to communicate about environmental laws and regulations.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The stakeholders involved in this project agreed that several issues were conducive to being addressed on a regional level in collaboration with other regional stakeholders. However, they also recognized that collaboration is difficult to achieve in practice. Through several examples, this chapter has shown that the established institutional division of roles and responsibilities, as well as current legislation, creates challenges for cooperation and producing outcomes in a collaborative project. While the sea is described by the actors in the project as having no borders or boundaries, there clearly are boundaries in the political institutions and legal framework guiding the collaborative process—which limit the possibility of making decisions in a collaborative project involving actors from different organizations. The involved actors had diverse rationalities aligned with their roles and responsibilities, and their actions and standpoints were guided by diverse ways of assessing the problems and specific legislations. At the same time, the collaborative project established new viewpoints and new ways of doing things. Boundary work is a fruitful perspective for

conceptualizing the dynamics and ongoing communication within a collaborative project, viewing the project as a way of negotiating roles and responsibilities or maintaining a certain order. This chapter has also stressed that the collaborative project was understood to have several positive outcomes not formulated directly in its deliverables, and also that the friction, misunderstandings, and conflicts created when trying to transcend a project's boundaries can be understood as a positive outcome of a project by providing opportunities for involved actors to learn.

In previous research on collaboration, it has been argued that there is a lack of empirical studies that follow collaborative projects for a longer time (San Martín-Rodríguez et al., 2005). Many studies of collaborative projects are made after the collaborative project is finished. Being an empirical study of a collaborative process, this chapter contributes to this scholarly field by stressing the benefits of utilizing social anthropological methods and perspectives in analyzing environmental communication in collaborative projects.

In this chapter, we have tried to show that a collaborative project has more dimensions than what can be evaluated by measuring the degree to which the goals of the projects are fulfilled or through some external measurements. A social anthropological perspective on policy work is well suited to investigating communication within a project, as it seeks to describe and understand the concerned parties' conditions for existence and working by exploring the meanings congregated around policy implementation, organizational relationships, and conceptual structures (Shore et al., 2011). In this study, we have utilized anthropological methods of participant observations in studying collaborative efforts and communication—and demonstrated how an anthropological focus on the working beliefs of any human organization can be fruitful in analyzing environmental communication.

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