

Networked Environmental Governance in a Deliberative System: *Polycentric, Collaborative and Discursive*"¹

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Abstract

Drawn from a PhD research project that investigates what governance features best promote both ecological and human wellbeing, this paper recapitulates its conclusions highlighting a proposed architecture for networked environmental governance. Employing a comparative case study of three forest protected areas in the Philippines, the thesis found that legitimacy, accountability, cost-efficiency in decision-making, coordination, and resilience are mutually reinforcing in their performance as forest governance features promoting distributive justice, livelihood protection, ecosystem protection, and resilience – core values for ecological and human wellbeing. When faced with tensions and trade-offs, the deliberative nature of a networked governance mechanism is instrumental in turning these tensions into synergies for collective actions. A legitimacy deficit that is more common in governance networks can be addressed by a system that is conceptualized to employ discursive engagements in both the public and the empowered spaces, aided by a bridging institution in terms of transmission and accountability; and substantiated by discursive representation in cases when descriptive representation proves to be infeasible, limiting, and/or unjust. The overall analyses of the findings suggest that effective networked governance involving state and non-state actors that works for both forests and people is one that is polycentric, collaborative, and discursive operating in a deliberative system. This system of environmental governance also creates an enabling setting for a just and sustainable society to thrive.

Key words: Environmental Governance, Networks, Deliberative System, Forests, Philippines

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1. Introduction

With mounting evidence on the critical role that it plays in determining societal wellbeing, governance has become a subject of increasing attention among researchers and practitioners in various fields. More often than not, the general literature on this topic associates governance principles, such as legitimacy and efficiency, with tensions, and practitioners seem to overemphasize the notion of tradeoffs involving the environment and development. It is important to acknowledge that there are often tradeoffs entailed in many environmental decisions made. Nevertheless, a more fundamental consideration is that a positive sum for ecological and human wellbeing is not something unattainable in environmental governance's theory and practice. An orientation that sees compatibilities beyond conflicts facilitates creativity in collective actions for more effective environmental solutions.

In this study, I have sought to understand each of the criteria of good forest governance, namely: legitimacy, accountability, cost-efficiency, coordination and resilience. While previous empirical investigations on environmental governance have focused on analyzing its principles, a contribution of this project lies in its emphasis to capture better the principles' significance by examining their interactions with each other and how they individually or collectively influence the overall governance mechanism's performance in addressing the core values to be maximized. Moreover, in order to answer my central question on what governance features best promote both ecological and human wellbeing, I have also taken steps in determining how the overall good forest governance looks like by understanding the interface between governance features and outcomes.

The comparative case analysis supports the proposition that polycentric, collaborative, and discursive forest governance facilitates better performance in both ecological and social terms. This has been particularly reflected in the Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park which has the most networked governance mechanism among the three forest protected areas investigated. The following presents an overview of the cases followed by a section sketching out the analytical framework used in the study. Take-home messages from the three cases are provided. This paper also drew out some implications of the findings for the theories and practice of environmental governance guided by the following themes: Power and Discourse; Representation and Deliberation. Discussions on these and some recommendations are followed by a section that proposes the architecture of environmental governance for both forests and people, before concluding the paper.

2. Case Studies Overview

This project was conducted against a backdrop of a changing character of political decision-making in the environmental domain and the broader setting, in which state-centric governance no longer controls the rules of the game. The cases examined are the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park in northern Philippines, the Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park in the south, and the Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park in the central part of the country. I chose them on the bases of their significance in terms of biological diversity, as well as on their differences in governance approaches. They are among the 10 priority protected areas in the country identified as highly significant for biodiversity conservation;

they are all characterized by the presence of indigenous and other forest-dependent peoples; and they are sites of environment and development programs carried out with the two-pronged goal of biodiversity protection and development. As such, they have been initially provided with major funding support from global actors. The three cases are, in theory, all under a decentralized government-coordinated multi-stakeholders governance system; this is, however, muddled in practice. They exhibit variations in their modes of governing. On what appears to be a dominant characteristic, the Sierra Madre case is more ‘donor-driven’; the Kitanglad more ‘networked’; and the Kanlaon is relatively ‘state-dominated’.

3. Analytical Framework

My research traces, and analyses features of governance mechanisms involving state and non-state actors in authoritative decision-making processes and their relationship with governance outcomes. In examining how the attributes of governance arrangements and processes influence the capacity of the social-ecological systems in addressing conservation and development goals, I use the following criteria: 1) *Legitimacy*, 2) *Accountability*, 3) *Cost-efficiency*, 4) *Coordination*, and 5) *Resilience*. I then looked into the governance features’ impact on distributive justice, livelihood protection, ecosystem protection, and sustainability – core values for ecological and human wellbeing.

For purposes of this study, I use the following definitions:

Governance Criteria

1. *Legitimacy*. Those who are governed accept the intervention as appropriate in terms of its processes, as well as its perceived potential outcome.
2. *Accountability*. To be accountable is to be held responsible; accountability includes the extent to which there is clarity about the roles of various institutions in decision-making; there is systematic monitoring of sector operations and processes; and the basis for basic decisions is clear or justified.
3. *Cost-efficiency*. I use the notion of cost-efficiency which focuses on costs in terms of time, money, effort, and other resources spent in decision-making; I do not use the welfare economist’s notion of efficiency in utilitarian social welfare terms as this aggregates too many questions of livelihood and wellbeing into one measure.
4. *Coordination*. This refers to the extent to which various agencies and actors, whose decisions impact upon forests, are adopting coordinated strategies to obtain higher joint benefits or reduce their joint harm.
5. *Resilience*. The ability of the mechanism to steer human and ecological systems back to normal operating range in the face of severe ecological problems (Dryzek, 1987).

The five criteria used in this thesis in examining forest governance mechanisms perform interdependently in shaping outcomes. While legitimacy, accountability, cost-efficiency, and coordination are necessary conditions in good forest governance, I consider ‘resilience’ as contingent, that is, required only when “one commences from a situation of fundamental disequilibrium” (Dryzek, 1987 p.54). As necessary conditions, a combination of the first four features is essential in all forest governance mechanisms if the aim is to

have structures and processes that will facilitate the maintenance, or enhancement of the capacity of the social-ecological systems in promoting both ecological and human wellbeing. In order to benefit both forests and people, these criteria must, in addition, be anchored on the values as defined below.

Core Values

1. *Distributive Justice*. The fair distribution of benefits and burdens to the least advantaged peoples in the course of protected area management and conservation.
2. *Ecosystem Protection*. Conservation of forests for the purpose of sustaining or enhancing the generation of ecosystem services and products.
3. *Livelihood Protection*. Protection of the local communities' access to the benefits derived from the use of forests and forestlands through conversion of forests to other uses, direct use of forest products, and indirect environmental services (Tacconi, 2007), which support subsistence consumption, cash income, agricultural inputs, input to industries, or input to capital formation.
4. *Sustainability*. The use and management of the resource for maximum long-term benefit.

4. Key Messages

Case 1. Donor-driven: When local realities take the backseat

In forest governance discourse among developing countries where people dwell in the forest or in its fringes, legitimacy is often expressed through concern for local participation and recognition of local institutions and knowledge. The case of the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park has been particularly insightful when talking about a governance scenario where local realities take the backseat, and the initiatives are donor-driven. As this happens, it spoils the functioning and sustainability of the socio-ecological system.

A great number of the environment and development programs implemented in the developing countries are made possible with the funding support from foreign donors. Given this, I am more interested in finding out the diverse effect and its dynamics when global actors are involved, and the ways to overcome it. All the three protected areas covered in this research have received external funding. But a unique characteristic in the Sierra Madre case has been the expanse that it allowed the international actors to dominate. This is not something that is clear-cut however as the kind of dominance that we are dealing here is associated to what others call as 'soft power'. Given its nature, it is often overlooked; its influence in shaping authoritative decisions must not however be taken lightly as the findings have revealed.

The Sierra Madre was the most highly-funded site; the indigenous peoples and other local communities have been represented in the policy-making body and they participated in relevant activities including decision-making and program implementation. So what is the problem? The nuances in the Sierra Madre's mode of governing relative to the other cases spell its difference. Integration of local knowledge and institutions in the formal decision-making had been wanting or weak as they were overshadowed by the power that emanates from development aid. The governance mechanism failed to change perspectives, rural

lives, and landscapes for the better. Its weakness in allowing external mandates to subtly drive internal processes turned out to be self defeating.

The case indicates that the donors' as well as the external implementers' influence comes from its very nature; it intrinsically positions the locals to assume the role of 'beneficiaries' of their assistance. This relationship naturally creates an upward accountability system where the local recipients would tend to be more mindful of funding conditions and other external considerations rather than what they think are the best local decisions and actions. This was evident for instance in the implementing INGO's priority on physical infrastructures which was very much a reflection of its organizational mandate; and as the case had shown, its failure in delivering the expected outcome of its other efforts such as the agroforestry project was also primary brought about by the inefficiency of the complex bureaucracy of the implementing international organization within which it operates and to which it is deemed accountable.

Faced with a situation where 'money talks' in favour of an upward accountability, the challenge for the governing actors is to strike a balance among public discourses by developing a more systematized downward accountability through improved communication channels with local communities. With the latter's sharpened understanding about what the interventions are for, and the roles that different actors are responsible for, they will learn to see themselves as partners rather than as beneficiaries; they become empowered and critical about decisions that affect them and therefore become more involved in shaping decisions and collective actions.

The Sierra Madre case has provided an insight especially relevant to situations where efforts to address environment and development objectives are carried out through foreign-funded projects; these are countless in the developing world. Foreign funds per se are good; it is their unregulated power that produces bad results.

The donor agencies and the governing actors can counteract 'soft power' by investing more on 'soft projects' aiming to build capacities, such as the enhancement of local communicative processes and strategic integration of local knowledge with formal systems; they can also mitigate its negative effect by helping reshape the discourse that puts them at a superior position; they can do so for example by avoiding or at least minimizing the introduction of the intervention with a 'project' nomenclature which from the perspective of local communities, can give rise to bureaucratic involvement in resource management and alienation from local interaction in terms of management responsibilities (see Giddens 1994 in Hanna, Folke, and Maler 1996). It can rather be effectively presented as an approach or strategy where areas for collaboration with the locals will be developed; otherwise, what could be cooperative and symbiotic relations are transformed into competitive and 'positional' relationships, in which some social conditions conducive to collective action—solidarity, trust, and equity—are eroded (Hirsch 1976 in Hanna, Folke, and Maler 1996 p.47). The introduction of external funding can have the unintended consequence of deflecting energies previously devoted to cooperation into competition among actors in budget-constrained communities. As this happens, accountability is weakened which consequently undermines the legitimacy of the governance mechanism, adversely affecting the latter's capacity.

Case 2. Networked: Turning tensions into synergies for collective actions

The case of the Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park has particularly demonstrated that the synergy across the forest governance criteria has promoted both ecological and human wellbeing. It has performed relatively better compared to the other two cases on all features (i.e. legitimacy, accountability, efficiency, coordination, and resilience) whose interplay has facilitated the mechanism's effectiveness in relation to the core values aimed to be maximized for both forests and people. The result does not necessarily imply the absence of tensions. But the tensions evident in the case were not directly involving the clashing of criteria; rather they stem from the following: diversity of actors, differing institutional mandates, and often competing priorities; overlapping management rights; and the conservation's adverse effects on forest-dependent communities' income brought about by the limited access and use of the resource.

The criteria have the potential to compete. But this would likely happen only when the above mentioned tensions of differences in priorities, among others, are not resolved. Unless it is clear to the governing actors that those tensions reflect first and foremost a pluralism of values and interests, resolutions can be unduly perceived as highly problematic which primarily lies on the governance structure; in situations like this, strategies that are often resorted to relate to change in 'institutional hardware'. Reform in institutional arrangements or establishing a new one are at times desirable in creating a more enabling atmosphere in resolving conflicts; it is not however the most decisive in producing the desired outcomes. The Mt. Kitanglad case revealed that neither is it essential in most instances. Rather, what proved to be more viable is the shaping of discourses or what Dryzek calls 'institutional software' that puts relevance to the 'institutional hardware' that is introduced (1996, p.104).

While tensions exist among various interests, points of convergence based on universal principles and values are also recognizable in a political arena. Operating under this premise, the Mt. Kitanglad case had demonstrated that the mechanism's most effective device in clarifying rules and roles, as well as in harmonizing views and values had been coordination and engagement of discourses. This proved to be crucial in either challenging or supporting an institutional status quo in finding ways for a more effective performance. In particular, a negotiating tool employing deliberation among governing actors had helped resolved overlapping management domains and rights of the protected area. On the other hand, collaborative dialogues and deliberations had facilitated a deepened understanding on common interests; they led to some resolutions of earlier tensions involving livelihood concerns for example, broadened the communities' appreciation of the environment-development link and its impact on themselves and on others, and had driven them to be more innovative in their local solutions and other collective actions.

A relevant strategy employed which turned out to be a significant factor contributing to successful outcomes and sustainability in the area was building on local structures and institutions, high recognition of traditional knowledge and expertise, and integration of indigenous and local culture to broader management structures facilitating culture - sensitive policies and practices. 'Traditional knowledge' as used here refers to the "knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and local communities, developed and shared through experience gained over time and adapted to the local social structure, culture and environment" (UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8 (j), 2007 in Figueroa 2011 pp.237-238). This and other types of information are better captured by communicative coordination. As the case had shown, an awareness of the importance of

communication was manifested on the governance mechanism's strong investment on approaches such as consultations, dialogues, and deliberations – while networked governance is more conducive for these forms of communication, the findings from this research project had pointed out that it is the quality of the latter and the capacity of the actors and the structures to produce them which primarily determine the success of networked governance in the context of environmental decision-making for ecological and human wellbeing.

Case 3. State-centric: Development and sustainability paradox

When associated with economic growth, development has generally been long perceived as being in conflict with the environment. The importance of economic growth cannot however be underestimated; in the 2011 UN Millennium Development Goals Report for instance, the highlighted development successes were attributed in part to the continued economic growth in some developing countries.

The case of the Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park supports the contention that as soon as the development priorities of the state kick in, effective forest governance is lost. It is in the environment – economic growth dynamics that the dilemma is evident both in theory and in practice. In the case examined, a geothermal power project required the construction of dams that altered the protected area's buffer zone, with striking negative impacts on the physical environment of the forest ecosystem. On the other hand, one can imagine a scenario in which electricity shortage is a pressing concern. Environment is for the human wellbeing; so is development; and the geothermal power project could (if not in this case) benefit both environment and wellbeing.

How then are we going to address the critical nexus of socio-economic security and environmental sustainability? In the African contexts for example, many governments now view bio-fuels as having the potential to increase agricultural productivity and export thus strengthening their national economies, at the same time help in the climate change mitigation through reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Escalating uncertainties however challenge this scenario. The same can be said with regards to the failing attempt in the Kanlaon case.

Paradigms had evolved consistent to the call of synergizing environmental conservation with economic development: from 'sustainable development' in the 70s (see Dryzek 1997); 'ecological modernization' in the 80s, as well as 'reflexive modernization' in the 90s (Hajer 1995; Dryzek 1997); to the more recently popularized 'green growth', and 'green economy' discourses that have become buzzwords in the UN system and more. While the earlier application of ecological modernization seems to be predominantly in the developed west, it has now been applied beyond it (Mol et al. 2009). On the other hand, green growth and green economy which reflect the ecological modernization's basic tenets have started to make a way into the global south and the developing countries. In the 2005 Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific an agreement was made on green growth as strategy for sustainable development (in which three years later the host country – South Korea declared its commitment in embracing a Low Carbon, Green Growth as the core of the Republic's new vision). Year 2008 marked the UNEP- led launching of the Green Economy Initiative. A common feature in all of these discourses is their compatibility with 'sustainable development', although starting from 'ecological modernization' they are more defined than the earlier notion of sustainable development in their approach that advocates technological innovation and/or

beyond; and are more vocal about their view on the value of environmental protection for business profitability.

The foregoing discussion presents an inspiring development in terms of appreciation of some institution-changing discourses that put forward the notion of mutually reinforcing environment and development in the context of sustainability and progress. Now let's examine its viability in a country like the Philippines. Drawing lessons from the findings of the study, I argue that there is a need to buttress the discourse on 'synergies' that can replace the prevailing 'tradeoffs' narrative in forest governance discussions; understanding the link between deforestation and poverty, and the mutually supportive elements between forest protection and development are practically crucial in many tropical countries where agriculture is the mainstay of local economies; and given that degraded forests and insecure flows of forest ecosystems services can make communities and sectors more vulnerable to environmental change and lead to increased adaptation costs, this and many other important issues demand the governing (state and non-state global to local) actors to get rid of myopic lenses and take into account possibilities, risks, costs, prospects and gains in a more far-reaching fashion beyond the confines of their respective organizational directives.

Insights drawn from Kanlaon, like the other two cases highlight the value of communicative and reflexive engagements. There is a need for the state to lessen if not let go of its command and control approach to be an effective member-facilitator of a well-functioning networked governance mechanism. Insistence on the status quo of its institutional practice can serve as a pillar of support to the production-orientated thrust of a capitalist economy like the Philippines. There may be institutional arrangements that need to be altered, but what looks more fundamental, more salient, and cost-effective than this, is the reshaping of 'institutional software' as a priority strategy over change of 'institutional hardware' in improving forest governance; if it is addressed first, then there is more likelihood that any ensuing structural reform that follows enjoys higher legitimacy.

The following section provides the main implications from the study's findings, as well as some recommendations relevant to environmental governance theories and practice.

5. Implications and Recommendations

5.1 Power and Discourse

In this research, I have identified some influences in forest governance mechanisms which have the potential to either facilitate or impede good performance. These include but are not limited to overseas development grants, technocratic expertise, international organization's mandates, and government bureaucracy. The influence of actors associated with these spheres largely depends on the framing for their roles that have been reinforced by discourses. More often than not, they are unaware that the dynamics they are in can sacrifice the very objectives that they claim to address. They normally come into play based on legitimacy obtained through a supportive discourse; but it is worth noting that discourse that works to legitimize an action can also be used to undermine it.

The power of a discourse is supported in Dryzek's notion of institutional design in which he views discourses as being intertwined with its institutions, arguing that the latter cannot

operate without an associated and supportive discourse or discourses. He defines discourse as ‘a framework for apprehending the world embedded in language, enabling its adherents to put together diverse bits of sensory information into coherent wholes’, and suggests that it is best treated as ‘institutional software’ (or discursive software). ‘Institutional hardware’ on the other hand exists in the form of rules, rights, operating procedures, customs, and principles (Dryzek 1996 pp.103-105).

Power in environmental governance can be viewed by the extent to which its structures and processes shape individual or collective actions in the environmental domain. The ‘structures and processes’ mentioned are akin to Young’s ‘social institutions’ that are established and made operational, capable of resolving conflicts, facilitating cooperation, or, alleviating collective-action problems in a world of interdependent actors; in the way that it is being conceptualized here, there is no presupposition on the need to create material entities or organizations to administer the rules of the game that arise to handle the governance function (1994). Given that Young dismisses the idea of having an organization as a necessary condition for the rules of the game to be administered, there seems to be a latent recognition of another form of a powerful tool shaping individual or collective actions.

The politics of discourse as Hajer has put it, ‘is not about expressing power-resources in language but is about the actual creation of structures and fields of action by means of story-lines, positioning, and the selective employment of comprehensive discursive systems’ (1995, p.275). Determining the pathways through which a discourse has influence on the policy and politics of environmental issues is not straightforward. Drawing from this study, I can at least identify salience and ‘credibility’ as important attributions that actors make whether their decisions and actions get affected in response to a dominant discourse. In the Sierra Madre case for instance, a discourse that viewed government officials who strictly enforced regulations against illegal logging as insensitive to the locals’ need for livelihoods had made many officials supportive of this destructive practice especially during their electoral campaigns (some went to the extent of passing a resolution supportive of constructing roads across the protected area in the name of development) with the hope of gaining the communities’ votes during the elections (although some tended to justify it claiming the sincerity of their concern for the local communities); in the case of Kanlaon, it demonstrated how a church-supported discourse on the environmental damage done by the geothermal project had moved civil society groups to protest against its continued operation which influenced decision-making at the empowered space³; in Kitanglad on the other hand, the discourse that closely linked forest protection to the indigenous culture has significantly contributed to the successful campaign for the indigenous peoples’ support, turning them into active partners and prime movers in resource conservation.

Discourse as a form of power can have significant consequences. Both institutional software and hardware bring promises and perils to environmental governance; they can cut both ways. While a discourse may be used to better inform a discussion for a sound environmental decision-making for example, it has also the potential to be damaging, even more damaging than the institution with which it is associated. While the hardware provides the backdrop, it is this institutional software which has the greater power to

³ By ‘empowered space’ Dryzek refers it as the arena “where authoritative collective decisions get produced”, and he describes ‘public space’, as having a “diversity of viewpoints and discourses that can interact ideally without legal restriction” (Dryzek 2009, p.5).

influence, and therefore discourses also need to be altered if a negative influence potentially leading to an undesirable outcome is to be barred. Discourses can be a product of manipulation by people who frame the issue in a way that favours them at the expense of the forest ecosystem's sustainability (e.g. that illegal logging is justified for local livelihoods). In cases like this, they are defended and used as an instrument of state and business interests to gain public support, undermining the critical hat of stakeholders at the public space on the strategy employed especially if they are the recipients of what are being packaged as desirable ends like livelihoods, local government revenue, or electricity supply as illustrated in the cases. In altering some damaging discourses, one can avoid the charge of discourse manipulation by providing an arena for deliberation characterized by a pluralism of inputs from among affected actors or their representatives.

How do we counteract a dominant discourse whose soft power produces an undesirable outcome? A strategy that addresses this seems to be essential to an effective functioning of an environmental governance mechanism for a good environmental performance. These soft powers can neglect or undermine scrutiny of approaches on how they would actually respond to both environment and development needs when the associated discourse presents incentive to gain with the continuity of the intervention supported by it. This presupposes that the actors' values are aligned to the potential benefits involved. One may argue that it is natural for people to buttress a discourse that would render something beneficial for them. However, if the governing actors recognize a hegemonic discourse that embodies only one side of the two-pronged socio-ecological goal, that influence from it should be counteracted by addressing the knowledge gap and encouraging information flow which is better addressed by deliberation and other discursive engagements. Pathways through which reasoned information can emerge need to be explored in reshaping, balancing, or counteracting an existing one, thus influencing the policy and politics of environmental governance. Deliberation or other forms of discursive engagement involving state and non-state actors also serve to clarify big concepts that can at times dilute the nuances on the ground undermining both environmental and developmental objectives.

With the nature of donors' and other international actors' influence primarily coming from a 'soft power', it is hardly visible (and is manifested through other expressions instead such as priorities in the conservation and development project implementation which in the Sierra Madre case were more reflective of external mandates), but its 'permeability' is a feature which can be brought into play in order to alter it into a desirable form; one way of doing this might be the use of counter discourse. This can be done for example through discursive engagements which were relatively better depicted in the Kitanglad and the Kanlaon cases, where local knowledge is proactively given a platform to get discussed and disseminated within a deliberative environmental governance system that links formal and informal political fields (i.e. networked governance mechanism with public space engaging with the authoritative space).

5.2 Representation and Deliberation

Any democratic environmental decision-making arena calls for representation of stakeholders' interests and values; such is supposedly a minimum requirement for an empowered space in the process of obtaining legitimacy. Vieira and Runciman contend that "representation is an open-ended concept that is able to accommodate a wide range of

different political visions, including long- as well as short-term political thinking. ...whatever solutions are to be found to the problems the world currently faces, they will have to involve representation in some form or other since there is no plausible form of politics in the modern world that can eschew the concept of representation altogether. We cannot do without representation if we are to assert our presence, and shape our environment collectively” (2008, p.183-191).

As we recall the three cases discussed, all have a multi-stakeholder governance and policy-making body with membership of as many as 60 people representing sectors or organizations. The mixed results of their performance and outcomes however highlight the contentious nature of representation. As the Sierra Madre and the Kanlaon cases demonstrated, representation of persons or groups did not necessarily translate to voices of the representatives and consequently their constituents heard or incorporated in decision-making. This finding seems to undermine the ‘descriptive representation’ that Mansbridge put forward which gives emphasis on the virtue of shared experience in which ‘representatives are in their persons and lives in some sense typical of the larger class of persons whom they represent’ (1999, p.629). This more conventional representation of persons and groups as a way of employing a transformative participatory approach within a governance mechanism while having its benefits does not however guarantee adequate accommodation of interests and values. As indicated in the cases, there is a certain ‘politics’ involved that weaken descriptive representation’s representativeness as well as its transformative potential. Let us recall for instance the Sierra Madre and the Kanlaon cases.

During the time when there was sufficient representation of the indigenous peoples - the *Agta*, by their tribal leaders, their presence had resulted in both desirable and undesirable outcomes. While it facilitated the integration of their local knowledge and experience within the formal decision-making processes, it also became instrumental in having some representatives’ information used by unscrupulous members of the governing body to reinforce illegal logging, a major issue that the forest governance mechanism was in the first place aiming to solve. In particular, the *Agta*’s familiarity with the local landscape and their knowledge of the locations where hardwood could be found became easily accessible to illegal loggers who were in conspiracy with others wearing the forest governing actors’ hat. And with the *Agta*’s need for income it was almost always irresistible for them to accept offers by their fellow ‘governing actors’ whose political and economic influence cannot be underestimated. Even the politics of seating arrangement in a PAMB meeting has the potential to silence an *Agta* representative when it characterized the latter as having an inferiority complex relative to the other members of a decision-making body displaying higher technocratic capability and social standing.

Moreover, granting that the adverse effect of a direct and descriptive representation of persons or groups was out of the picture, still, some pieces of evidence from the case pointed out that this kind of representation although advantageous in particular instances, is not always feasible. When there was financial deficiency such as the situation when the World Bank and the Dutch government-funded projects ended for example, it resulted to what was deemed necessary significant reduction of representatives of some tribal communities, as their continued presence in the formal decision-making arena had meant more budgetary costs which the local institutions cannot afford.

In Kanlaon on the other hand, the earlier representation of NGOs by the deliberating sectoral representatives in the governing body had indicated its importance in contesting

and influencing some decisions leading the latter to be more reflective of public interest and its value on forest protection. While there were manifestations of accomplishment in this aspect, those positive signs did not thrive however and have in fact been weakened by the challenges encountered where the broader political system, like that in the Philippines within which the state-centric environmental governance mechanism operates is in many ways corrupt. The case had later demonstrated that when civil society representatives confront state representatives in a formal governing body, even if these state actors who have been working on the ground could empathize a public clamour opposing a particular decision, they could not simply change their position if that decision has been approved and supported by higher rank officials; their minds maybe free to think but their hands seemed 'tied'.

Given the state-centric set up (and that even other actors within the state are perceived powerless to oppose any irregularity linked to a directive that has come from those above their ranks), contestations by the non-state actors will have little impact within the empowered space, and so the better alternative was to freely express their voices through the public space. Moreover, the much favoured undue accommodation of the EDC (geothermal power company) within the governing body speaks a lot about government's priority on development objective over anything else. Having perceived themselves to be at a losing end within the mechanism, they might as well not waste their time inside if there is a more useful venue outside.

But then again, as the Kitanglad case had shown, there is a potential for significant benefit if non-state actors are also meaningfully represented in the formal decision-making arena; and their voices are actually made part of or are represented in the empowered space (where the governance mechanism is rather polycentric in nature). When civil society groups are represented in the empowered space, opportunities for contestation and deliberation will have a higher likelihood to transform discourses into decisions or at least affect the latter for collective actions. And so for the non-state actors to become another centre of power having a relatively 'equal footing' as that of the traditionally dominating player (state actors) in terms of environmental decision-making, I suggested earlier in the Kanlaon case that the state needs to let go or lessen its 'command and control' approach, enabling the non-conventional actors in the empowered space to meaningfully participate in the formal decision-making processes. As Hajer and Versteeg put it emphasizing the changing political field, "Solutions for pressing environmental problems cannot be found within the boundaries of the sovereign nation-state, forcing established institutions to take part in transnational networks of governance in which power is dispersed" (2005, p.182; see also Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Torgerson 2003). Applied in protected areas within a nation-state, there is no other better way for government actors to proceed than to blend with the non-state actors if they want their functions to be in tune with and more effective in the present socio-political current.

The foregoing discussions had pointed out some factors hindering the viability of descriptive representation. Some of these were the organizations' financial resource limitation, constraint in the individual actors' communication skills or language barrier, and the limiting effect of state dominance. Not all of these can however be addressed by a state's response shifting its command and control approach to more of a facilitation role. Moreover, how are we going to deal with an argument put forward by some scholars that forms of representation generally "have to rely for their enduring hold on our politics, and on our imaginations, on the power of the state, which remains the definitive representative institution and is unlikely to give up its power easily, or without a struggle" (Vieira and

Runciman 2008, p.191)? Granting that state dominance will continue to be the rule of the game in certain situations, are we left then with no other option in improving the quality of representation in cases where the state has become a hindering factor? How about those other factors other than the state, how can they be resolved? Along this line, it is important to look at exactly who/what is being represented. A closer examination of this issue will bring into light that what really matters is the representation of the stakeholders' interests and values.

Implications of the study results suggest the prospect of representing discourses to be more enabling and encompassing in terms of improving substantial representation, that is, representation of interests. A discourse is conceptualized as "a set of categories and concepts embodying specific assumptions, judgments, contestations, dispositions, and capabilities". Discursive representation is associated with theories of deliberative democracy that put emphasis on the "engagement of discourses in existing institutions of government and the broader public sphere, and those that ponder the design of deliberative institutions as part of the architecture of government" (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008, p.481).

Even in some identified contexts in which 'descriptive representation' is viewed to be favourable for the disadvantaged groups (Mansbridge 1999) discursive representation seems to be decisive in enhancing representation of interests and values, and can be complemented by the descriptive representation utilizing discourses in its reflexive engagements. In the context of representing the indigenous peoples for example, what determines its representativeness is not much about the fact that the representative is a tribal group elder whose skin color and other physical attributes or life circumstances are akin to the peoples he represents. These are important and are often enabling factors but these do not guarantee effectiveness in transmitting views and values. What looks more critical in terms of influencing collective action is his capacity to articulate and put forward his tribe's interests in decision-making processes through discourses. I then argue that while descriptive representation is contingent, discursive representation is a necessary condition, for how else can one capture interests and values better than through the discourses articulated by those who hold or support them? Furthermore, a danger in representing actors directly by personal or sectoral representatives is that it tends to erase the possible converging values among descriptive representatives which could have been enabling for collective actions and more sustainable outcomes. Thus, having the government to represent the interest of production, and the indigenous peoples to represent conservation might lead to impasse, showing the need for an alternative and more innovative way of representing.

Discursive representation has the potential to resolve some aforementioned constraining factors. It is relatively cost-efficient avoiding usual material costs entailed in representation of persons or groups. It can narrow or bridge the communications skills gap between and among descriptive representatives by giving prime consideration to discourses rather than the people supportive of them; and gives the responsibility to deliberate to those having competence to articulate them better, giving a relatively more equal footing to the discourses and interests represented. Specifying that the most articulate should represent discourses can create tension with the egalitarian aspect of democracy emphasizing that all people are equal and therefore deserve equal rights and opportunities. Discursive representation does not serve to undermine equality. Rather, it recognizes that there are basic disparities when it comes to actors' capacities to influence decisions and collective actions which need to be addressed in a more creative way to

advance the broader interests of the least advantaged in the society. Discursive representation is also more accommodating for the representation of nature and of the future generations which can best be depicted through discourses from among rational beings who value them. Moreover, it presents an innovative and strategic way of looking at how to shape and eventually reform an institutional design by prioritizing its institutional ‘software’ rather than its ‘hardware’ (which is made possible through a governance mechanism’s deliberative capacity).

The foregoing discussion indicates the important potential role of discursive representation. In the following section, I will outline an environmental governance architecture that facilitates public goods in the forest-people domain. In particular, it proposes what might an institutional design look like which enhances the defining features of good forest governance promoting distributive justice, ecosystem protection, livelihood protection, and sustainability – core values for both ecological and human wellbeing.

6. Forest Governance Architecture for Ecological & Human Wellbeing

Lessons from this study have pointed out networked governance as a more desirable mode, enabling better performance in both ecological and social terms. Associated with relatively novel institutional arrangements that shift focus from linear lines of authoritative command giving paramount status to the sovereign state, to the more complex social interactions among actors within and beyond the state in policy processes (Torgerson 2003; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003), the feasibility and effectiveness of this form of governance require further examination (see Graham et al. 2003; UNEP 2012). Analyses of the findings suggest that effective networked governance that works for both forests and people is one that is polycentric, collaborative, and discursive operating in a deliberative system.

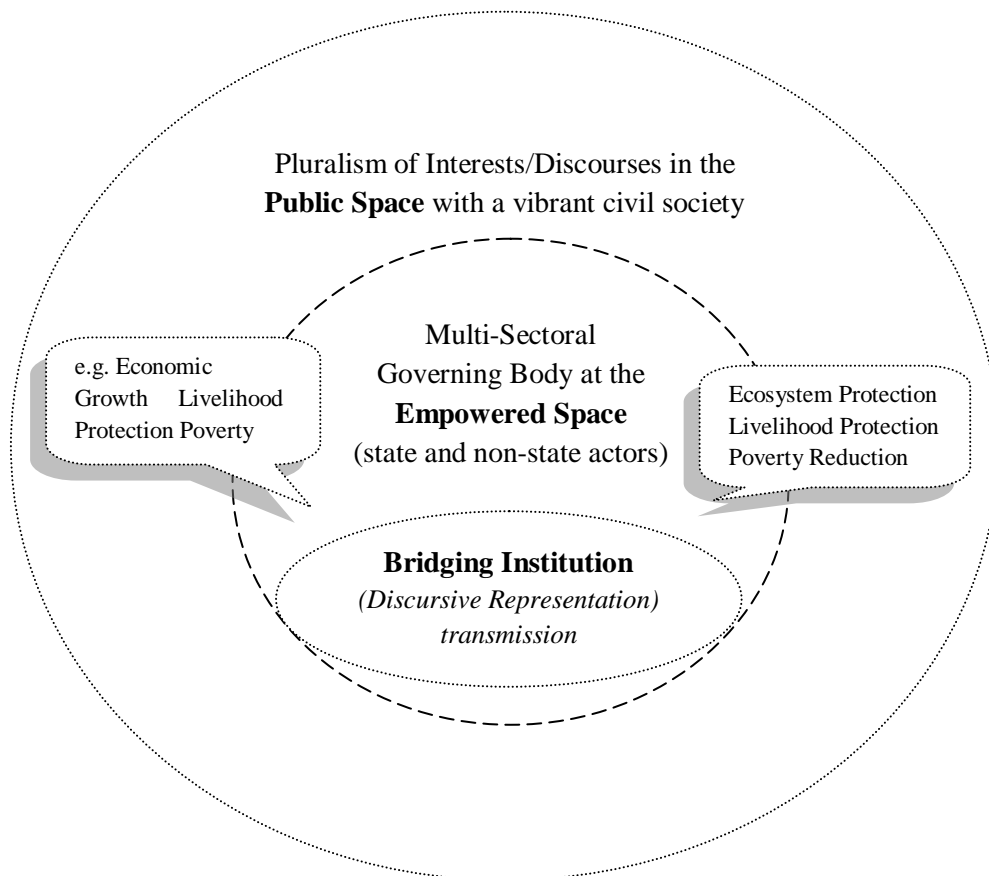
In order for polycentricity to be a viable option, it necessitates coordination across different centres of polycentric governance. Here, ‘de-centering’ of power held by a central actor (traditionally by the state in a liberal democratic context) is not limited to decentralization closely associated with devolution of authority by the central to the local governments; from top to downward levels. Instead, this mechanism reflects power that is spread to different nodes, be they at the higher or lower levels. In the context of forest conservation where government is involved, it therefore entails that the latter is among the many centres; there is power sharing among state and non-state actors facilitated through coordination.

A collaborative mechanism employs communication and discourse as its tool and deliberation as its central process. This attribute is essential for polycentricity to work since such a deliberative practice is more context-oriented than one which is not and is therefore relatively sensitive to the governance underpinnings. Along this line, discursive representation is an important feature of the architecture of polycentric and collaborative environmental governance that works for forests and people. As it enhances substantial representation, it addresses accountability issue which becomes a pressing problem as the distance between the represented and representative widens - a situation more typical in networks. The notion of discursive representation helps in drawing attention to the often overlooked institutional software in whose function the operation of the institutional hardware relies (Dryzek 1996).

The following figure (Figure 1) is a proposed model illustrating what might a polycentric and discursive networked governance look like in practice as it operates within a deliberative system in the context of protected areas in particular, or the environment domain in general. No specific mode of governance is a panacea for environmental protection. Results of this study however reveal that the now growing networked governance is more enabling for its mechanism to work for both forests and people, provided however that it is polycentric, collaborative, and discursive in nature. The polycentricity of its architecture exhibits diverse actors and multiple sources of power obtained from the different discourses they promote and the institutions to which these discourses are embedded. These different centres of influence are then being ‘networked’ through discursive engagements and collaboration to produce collective actions.

Figure 1

Networked Environmental Governance in a Deliberative System:
Polycentric, Collaborative and Discursive



In this illustration, I am taking on Dryzek’s conceptualization of a deliberative system that covers settings that are not exclusive to a particular kind of institution, such as a state; a commitment to the building of formal institutions is neither entailed in it. The systemic view however emphasizes the importance of tracing the connections between relevant processes and the production of collective outcomes (see Dryzek 2011 pp.225-232). Applied in environmental governance, this system has the following elements: *public space, empowered space, bridging institution, transmission and accountability, and decisiveness* of its features in determining collective actions.

I assume the public space as having diverse discursive nodes which include among others deliberative processes. An empowered space on the other hand can be constituted by state and/or non-state actors in the broader setting, employing deliberative modes of governance in coming up with authoritative decisions. While I recognize deliberation as an essential part of both the public and empowered spaces and that there must be a ‘critical distance’ between them, I put forward the idea of a bridging institution as another element in addition to Dryzek’s components of the system (2011, p.225-226) to underscore the value of a mechanism needed for a more strategic transmission of public interests and opinions to the empowered space. This added feature which advocates discursive representation is also meant to enhance the discursive accountability needed in a deliberative environmental governance system. The following elaborates the above template in the context of networked governance.

Transmission channels in a two-pronged deliberative system. As this networked governance operates, deliberative avenues can be found in both public and empowered spaces in a deliberative system. Parallel to the civil society’s presence in the public space is its representation at the empowered space. There is no well defined boundary between state and non-state actors especially at this space where both constitute the governing and policy-making body (such as in the case of the Protected Area Management Board-PAMB which is usually composed of representatives from national government agencies, local government units, indigenous peoples, NGOs, and the business sector when needed). While this kind of set-up runs the risk of undermining the non-state actors’ critical distance that is important in raising the accountability at the empowered space, it is however strategically facilitative of transmission channels where public interests can be more easily and sustainably integrated in authoritative decisions influencing collective outcomes.

It was indicated in the thesis findings that for an empowered space to be more conducive for non-state actors’ representation, legitimacy of the governance mechanism is required. Given this, it is more reasonable to keep the civil society at the public space active and discursively engaging since it has an inherent advantage in its accountability-enhancing role and can then likely contribute in improving the legitimacy, and hopefully, performance of the overall governance mechanism. Moreover, the crucial role of a vibrant civil society in the public space can serve to counter the risk associated with a situation where a ‘critical distance’ seems to get undermined when non-state actors formally engage with state actors at the empowered space.

Civil Society’s Challenge. Findings from the study also I highlight the civil society’s autonomy from the government to be aptly putting it in a more credible position as government ‘watchdogs’. Having said that, it is however important to wear a critical hat in one’s views of civil society. A vibrant one has the ability to express a plurality of values especially including those undermined by the state or market, in a more or less unconstrained manner (acting as political pressure group, putting forward their advocacy, or challenging the socio-political system through various means of expressions such as lobbying, dialogues, protests, boycotts among others). However, civil societies occupying the public space at times struggle to be purely so. The geothermal plant operation in Kanlaon for instance is a case in point where cooptation was evident. On one hand you have a church-led group of 10,000 people protesting against it. On the other hand, there were also segments in the civil society like some electric cooperatives and other NGOs supportive of it resulting from the business operator’s effort to convince them using the discourse of the gravity of electric shortage in the area and boasting about its project as a

showcase for ‘sustainable development’ through the use of the media. Cooptation was also evident in the Sierra Madre case when some members of the local communities including the indigenous peoples were in conspiracy with illegal loggers who used the discourse of ‘job generation and livelihoods’ with the goal of continuing forest exploitation. While these loggers and the associated business groups had embraced the local discourse of livelihood and rearticulated it through the media, it had the subtle effect of undermining the discourse of forest protection, paving a way to put forward a capitalist agenda.

Communication distortion at the public space is not the only issue that challenges civil society’s capacity to genuinely influence policy making. Another one is more associated with the broader political system within which it operates as it gets involved in the empowered space. While this may sound overwhelming, addressing the issue in a cost-effective way can be done by managing discourses which either help or hinder the institutional operations of the political system. This is facilitated by employing deliberative and other discursive processes that can lead to a promotion, or a weakening of an institution-enabling discourse or discourses. As the Sierra Madre and the Kanlaon cases had demonstrated, the country’s priority on economic growth was matched with an intimate relationship between the state and business sector which overshadowed the civil society’s attempt to put forward other relevant interests in the formal decision-making arena. The ensuing tension with broader socio-political realities had led to some ‘maneuvering’ of the state’s institutional arrangements to accommodate its interests. This had primarily been through the use of discourses such as ‘raising of revenues’ as a justification tolerating illegal logging for instance; or allowing the geothermal plant operation to infringe a law in the name of ‘sustainable development’. This signifies the structural power of business interests reinforced by discourses whose influence in shaping wanted or unwanted outcomes is even made more pronounced given the possibility that a particular discourse can provide cover for an interest. Accommodating different discourses in a relatively the same footing is then plausible through discursive representation.

Discursive representation. As shown in the figure, what I particularly emphasized in the notion of public space are not the actors or sectors themselves but the interests and values that they hold, represented by discourses which are formed not exclusively by civil society members but through the dynamic interactions between non-state and state actors. This presupposes that discourses put forward in the public space inevitably reflect different shades of interests shared within and/or among individuals regardless of their sectoral affiliation. It is then less reasonable if representation is anchored on persons or sectors than basing it on discourses that aptly capture the heterogeneous nature of interests. Applied in the developing world’s protected area setting, the illustration depicts two clusters of discourses showing how some values can be commonly intertwined in another value. It is not surprising for example if those who promote economic growth also advocate livelihood protection and poverty reduction; and that those who consider ecosystem protection as a priority also uphold the latter two. Even with the possibility of clashing priorities, one seems to always find a basic element that unites (such as ‘quality of life’ for example where values on livelihood and poverty reduction seem to be rooted).

Discursive representation can have a significant role in turning tensions into synergies for collective actions. Although it is not necessarily deliberative, its discursive nature and any associated deliberation employed at any stage (such as in generating the discourses being represented, or in transmitting them) have the potential to recognize some universal values and principles held by different actors. It is especially so given that an emphasis in discursive communication facilitates deeper understanding of fundamental bases of

individuals' preferences which can shed light on more universal principles upon which they are anchored. Moreover, by representing discourses, it avoids giving an undue advantage to an already relatively more 'influential' person or sector in a deliberative arena as it attempts to address the issue of stakeholders' difference in terms of communication competence which is prevalent in the conventional way of representing. Rather, it can effect a better balance between and among determined discourses which are better crystallized than the words of the deliberating actors prior to the deliberation proper. Having identified the discourses to be represented earlier on, it simplifies the process, and avoids blurring of interests brought about by the complex nature of a human person who can associate himself or herself to different values. Again, while in specific contexts 'descriptive representation' can be highly called for, a more fundamental requirement is the representation of discourses. So how can this be put in practice?

In the above prototype where a multi-sectoral board is taking the governing responsibility which typifies many conservation mechanisms these days, I suggest that the deliberating actors represent and engage discourses as a central part of policy and decision-making process. Representatives of each relevant discourse in this particular setting can be chosen by the board secretariat from among the incumbent members of the authoritative board, but preferably from among individuals closely associated with the public space who meet the criteria set out by the board (choosing options may largely depend on the objectives of the deliberation and the material resources available but basic considerations ideally include the strength of one's support to the discourse to be represented as well as, communicative competence as minimum requirement). Nevertheless, official member institutions at the empowered space constituting the multi-sectoral policy decision-makers and implementers will need to be represented as audience members (granting they are not the deliberating individuals themselves) whose relationship with the latter has to be reflexive as they are expected to come up with 'workable agreements' for collective actions compatible to the recommendations from the deliberative forum. In this particular instance, we see the value of having the authorized representatives of the governance mechanism (government and non-government collaboration), but unlike many existing state- non-state decision-making bodies in networked environmental governance setting, the number of persons representing can be significantly minimized.

Bridging institution. Another important device to operationalize discursive representation is having an 'actor' responsible in mapping the discourses from the public space. In the cases examined, this can mean improving the role of the board secretariat into a functional bridging institution in the interface of the discourse-holders and the policy-makers. In a way, the PAMB secretariats in the cases examined have partly assumed this role already when they conducted research work in preparation for every policy meeting, at the same time acting as a de facto evaluation and monitoring arm of the governance body. What I envisage as bridging institution will serve as a support unit which researches, maps, and articulates the differing discourses (both dominant and marginal) relevant to the policy issue under consideration and transmits them to the empowered space where deliberation is hosted. The same unit can function to feed back to the public the results of the deliberation vis-a-vis the decisions and actions taken by the relevant authoritative organizations. It may also be in a good position to identify and recommend prospective discursive representatives or they can be the discursive representatives themselves with the policy-makers as the audience members. A lead person in this bridging institution can be a potential moderator among the deliberating actors.

Going back to the premise that the system as envisioned here is not committed to the establishment of formal institutions, the empowered space can employ a loosely-structured or even an informal deliberation. In situations like this, the bridging institution does not disappear. Its relevance is in fact increased, yet with its bridging function, it remains distinct from the empowered space. The rigour it invests in generating differing discourses from the public space is more appreciated and may compensate a weakness entailed in the nature of the deliberative process. Consider for instance the secretariat of a regional forest network acting as bridging institution that uses ‘community resource mapping and accounting’ in teasing out the discourses of different tribal groups, upland and coastal communities relevant to a watershed under consideration. The community map that was produced reflecting the local discourses was overlaid on the technical map from the relevant state agency showing how the government makes sense of the ecosystem landscape under consideration in relation to their plans and programs. Out of this, a geographical at the same time, an issue map was produced which comprehensively captured the differing and often competing discourses. This map became a powerful transmission tool when presented to the empowered space and served to facilitate effective dialogues involving policy-makers and forest dwellers or affected farmers. There was no formal deliberation as conceptualized in many existing discussions in the literature about a deliberative system; the discursive representation provided by the map coupled with the discursive engagements employed by the bridging institution however directly influenced collective decisions and actions.

A ‘bridging institution’ can be taken as an alternative to the notion of ‘chamber of discourses’ (see Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008). Although the latter is also welcoming of a more informal chamber, it seems to suggest that a formal structure at the empowered space is closely linked to a formal deliberative forum. On the other hand, the bridging institution and its role in discursive representation is applicable in various settings (formal or informal structure, public or empowered space); and more often, its rule of conduct is informal or semi-formal. It can easily complement existing institutional arrangements even those adamant in sticking to the ‘sovereign state’, or to one which would rather keep a ‘critical distance’ from the empowered space. It is discernable in many ongoing environmental governance mechanisms whether they be in mega cities in the ‘west’ or in remote areas in the developing world.

A bridging institution is embodied for example by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)- steered Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG), an alliance covering ten forest hotspot countries across Africa and Asia which has been working since 2003 on ways ‘to shift power over forests towards those who enable and pursue sustainable forest-linked livelihoods’. Teams in each of these countries have been employing discursive processes as ‘they work to connect people marginalised from forest governance to those controlling it, and push for better decisions’. They promote ‘building key bridges, and not quick fixes...’ In Cameroon for instance, its team has facilitated the revision of a crucial government order in favour of local communities; in Tanzania, it installed key principles of rights and benefit sharing in emerging REDD+ strategies; and in India, it has convinced high-level players that the Forest Rights Act be made to work (IIED 2011). This kind of function has also been performed by the Asia Forest Network (AFN) as it connects forest-dwelling communities’ discourses in government agencies’ plans and programs through dialogues, cross-visits, and other innovative ways such as the use of geographical and issue maps.

Furthermore, the bridging institution has the potential to downgrade elitist structures or procedures, and with its relative flexibility it avoids erasing cultural differentiation and heterogeneity. It can therefore be a home for governing actors belonging to more conservative societies for example where the discursive nature of women is more evident in informal settings than in male-dominated formal deliberative forums (without necessarily undermining the broader transformative nature of its process). It is therefore more inclusive in practice. The relevance of a 'bridging institution' is also acknowledged in the literature as it is akin to what other scholars term as boundary or bridging organization (see for example Cash et al. 2006; Clark et al. 2011) framing it as that which mediates differences inherent in conflicting perceptions and interests as it plays an intermediary role between different arenas, levels, or scales and facilitate the co-production of knowledge (Cash et al. 2006) in the interface between science and policy for instance (Clark et al. 2011). When analyzed in relation to discursive representation, this organization serves as instrument in distilling discourses and improving transmission; it may or may not be officially attached to the empowered space, and like many NGOs or other private organizations partnering with the government, it may 'come and go' but its effectiveness in transmitting discourses relies much on its salience and credibility.

The bridging institution as conceptualized can be viewed both as an arena of discursive representation and a tool for transmission. As such, it covers both human and non-human agents. The discursive engagements which encompass both the empowered and the public spaces also contribute in widening the permeability of the deliberative system entailed in the broadened 'networking' which can increase the fluidity of interactions while facilitating some informal accountability-enhancing innovations.

While this framing of an environmental governance system broadly reflects a combination of some features from Dryzek's (2009) and Hendriks'(2006) notions of a deliberative system, compared to Dryzek's, it broadens the role of non-state actors beyond the public space which he emphasized as the locus of production and engagement of discourses (2008). While it supports Hendrik's idea of an 'integrated deliberative system', it particularly puts forward the representation of discourses (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008) in the deliberative forums as a preferred option over representation of actors or groups which seems implicit in Hendrik's proposition when she argues about the willingness of the deliberative participants (2006, p.500-5001). It regards discursive representation as essential, and descriptive representation as contingent.

I argue that discursive representation has the potential to resolve some issues that one encounters in the world of theories and practice. It responds to the problem associated with public participation that is closely tied to the vague nature of civil society (see *ibid.*). It makes one think beyond the 'who' question to the 'what' and therefore has the potential to be more inclusive as it pays better attention to substance more than its form (e.g. interest itself, rather than the one holding the interest). It is then attuned to those advocating for a representation of nature or of the future generation. It recognizes the complexity of human individuals (or an organization) and points out that a more practical alternative to capture them is through different discourses that are treated separately (this is simpler but not necessarily simplistic); representation is more crystallized. It can mitigate the downside and limitations (experienced by civil society representatives within formal decision-making bodies like those involving the state) brought about by the broader political and economic structures within which they operate as demonstrated for example in the Kanlaon case. And it can address logistical and material constraints rendering the infeasibility of face to face participation and descriptive representation as the Sierra Madre

case has shown us. This too will have implications on the issue of distributive justice in various levels and scales of environmental governance.

In sum, I recognize that a public-private presence in a governance mechanism may not always materialize since an empowered space may be officially occupied by the government alone. However, I promote a *polycentric, collaborative, and discursive networked governance* consisting of state and non-state actors within a deliberative system, particularly in the environment domain. Along this line, it is not hard to see the viability of a discursive engagement to be two-pronged, that is, a parallel existence of deliberative avenues for the civil society in both public and empowered spaces expressed through different modes within the system. Both aim to influence the state, but the civil society's institutionalized discursive amalgamation with the latter in the empowered space creates a higher potential for transmission that can lead to more legitimate, just, and effective collective actions.

7. Advancing a Just and Sustainable Society

The objective in trying to examine what forest governance features and system promote both ecological and human wellbeing is closely connected to finding ways to advance a just and sustainable society. While a key message highlighted in the case studies is the importance of the discursive and deliberative aspects of engagements, it also points out that certain dominant discourses have prime bearers (like a liberal state for 'economic growth'); an emphasis of which in both theory and practice gives growth a higher position over sustainability or equity issues. State's bias on economic growth undermines the latter. As the Sierra Madre and the Kanlaon cases have indicated, a state-centric governance mechanism despite its effort to conform to the sustainable development paradigm, finds it hard to keep a balance.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there is an increasing call to synergize environmental conservation with economic development. Among the popular discourses these days in response to that is the 'green growth' and 'green economy'. Critics are however fast to show that these discourses seem to treat the world as a 'single unit', that what is good for some is the same as that of others, which therefore tends to undermine social equity in the equation, and undermine sustainability in the long run. Surely, there are countless reasons behind the production objective, but taking into account that land and natural resources are not increasing, there is definitely an important ground to rethink the frameworks that are currently applied. There is a need to be more accommodating of other ways of thinking about what constitutes wellbeing or a good life such as those in tune with the language of indigenous peoples whose traditional ways of living are in many ways hindered by the current economic system in which the health of the markets are prioritized over human and ecological health (see Rawls 1985 on the plurality of conceptions of the good). Unless equity and justice considerations are factored in, it seems unlikely that 'modernization' can avoid being ecologically predatory and culturally alienating. Moreover, if issues on equity are not addressed, there will be trust erosion that can block collective actions.

The envisaged polycentric, collaborative, and discursive environmental governance is more compatible with treating the world as 'plural', thus recognizing the many other values and aspirations of other people beyond 'economic growth'. One strategy seems to be for the status quo's institutional arrangements with their growth orientation in a

capitalist system to loosen its grip in controlling society's decisions and collective actions and allowing people to think what to them within their context can better address ecological protection and wealth. One of the positive things that seems to come out from the 'green economy' discourse is its resulting critiques' message reminding us that while economic growth has a legitimate place in our world, it is not all that matters when we talk of human wellbeing. Development is a plural concept representing the quality of life. While it refers primarily to growth for the business sector, and comrades, it may mean 'simple life' for some which connotes more the preservation of nature, less exploitation, and production and so perhaps less economic growth, but envisaging a sustainable future with more satisfied people. This is also consistent with ideas about 'comprehensive wealth' or 'inclusive wealth' (see Dasgupta 2009; and Arrow et al. 2003 respectively).

Furthermore, while one can argue that green economy is a strategy that is aimed to close the gap between economic growth and environment protection clash through technological innovation, the empirical world had shown that advancement in technology for a green economy has benefited some sectors of the society while jeopardizing others (e.g. land grabbing in Africa triggered by growth in other countries, and for the sake of green growth). This is precisely happening due to overemphasis in 'growth' with 'greening' serving as a facade, which muddles the very foundation of sustainable development, subtly removing the issue of equity in the equation. This again points to the fact that we live in a pluralistic world and therefore it should be treated as such if our common aim is to have a sustainable and just society (or at least one that is closer to it).

A flaw in green economy (or the green growth concept) does not seem to point to the foundation to which it is anchored – sustainable development. Rather it points to its discursive emphasis on 'growth' which shapes responses from various sectors, undermining issues questioning distributive justice. Another reminder that we can draw from the findings is that what constitutes wellbeing is not only growth. As the Sierra Madre and the Kanlaon cases have shown, resource exploitation in the name of 'growth' benefited some through profits while damaging others. The notion of development for human wellbeing may differ for different people. If we want to be strategic in not eclipsing equity issues from the equation while at the same time accommodating broader global goals, the better form of governance that can respond to this seems to be one that is polycentric, collaborative, and discursive. This governance system is inclusive of both those who see the value of growth through technological advancement as desirable for development and those whose notion of the latter is associated with preserving nature and culture.

Given the dominance of liberal capitalist economies in today's world, it is not surprising that 'growth' still serves as the most powerful driver influencing 'green economy' discourse. However, some of us aspire towards a less capitalistic and more people-centred development. The promotion of polycentric, collaborative, and discursive environmental governance in a deliberative system as a step that moves towards that direction is worth exploring. With more emphasis given to discourses representing the plurality of interests and their interdependence at various levels and scales, it is likely that an emergence of a counter-discourse to 'growth' can help shape or eventually transform institutions that are enabling for collective actions geared towards a more balanced, just, and sustainable life.

8. Conclusion

To recap, this research project found that legitimacy, accountability, cost-efficiency in decision-making, coordination, and resilience are mutually reinforcing in their performance as forest governance features promoting distributive justice, livelihood protection, ecosystem protection, and sustainability – core values for ecological and human wellbeing. When faced with tensions and trade-offs, the deliberative nature of a networked governance mechanism is instrumental in turning these tensions into synergies for collective actions. A legitimacy deficit that is more common in governance networks can be addressed by a system that is conceptualized to employ discursive engagements in both the public and the empowered spaces, aided by a bridging institution in terms of transmission and accountability; and substantiated by discursive representation in cases when descriptive representation proves to be infeasible, limiting, and/or unjust. The overall analyses of the findings suggest that effective networked governance involving state and non-state actors that works for both forests and people is one that is polycentric, collaborative, and discursive operating in a deliberative system. This system of environmental governance also creates an enabling setting for a just and sustainable society to thrive.

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