Innovation Ltd. Boundary work in deliberative governance in land use planning

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This chapter describes the results of the analysis of boundary work in an experiment with deliberative governance in the Midwest of the United States of America: the Dairy Gateway project. This innovative project ran from 2003 until 2006 and involved farmers, environmentalists, and citizens of the state of Wisconsin in consensus building and conflict resolution (see attachment 4.1. for a timeline).

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION TO A WISCONSIN CONTEXT

The scenery of Northeast Wisconsin resembles the hilly landscape in Northern France with traditional family farms, red barns, and an occasional industrial farm. Highway 57 brings you from Green Bay, a city with approximately 120,000 inhabitants, to Door County, situated on a peninsula that stretches into Lake Michigan. The peninsula is the touristy part of this area and includes two other counties, Manitowoc and Kewaunee, that are sites of many dairy farms: Manitowoc County and Kewaunee County (see attachment 4.2. for overview of large industrial farms in these counties). Tourists from nearby cities; Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison, spend their vacation on the peninsula and build second homes or move to this area to escape the city. "Urban Sprawl" is what the original inhabitants, dairy farmers, and county officials call these developments.

To Dutch planners it is almost impossible to imagine that this urban sprawl causes problems similar to those of the densely populated Netherlands. However, the environmental quality of this area is under pressure due to the effects of modernization. Many of the small scale and mixed-use "ma-and pa" farms were transformed into industrial, intensive dairy operations, especially in Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties. These industrial farms and the small and medium sized farms can cause manure spills that contaminate the rivers and the drinking water of nearby residents. Modernization also entailed increased...
urbanization and tourism that contribute to the pollution of air, water, soil, and the scenery. The increased pollution and strains on land use led to more adversarial relationships within the area’s traditionally strong farming community in at least three ways.

First, the farming community became more divided. Small farmers feel pressured to compete with the industrial operations and have a hard time surviving. As in the rest of the Western world, in the Northeast of Wisconsin there is a tendency for small farms to disappear and to be replaced with larger operations that produce the same amount of milk. A second reason for more adversarial relationships is that farmers and non-farmers more often enter into conflicts. Sometimes non-farming community members hire professional environmental organizations, like Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA), to represent them. These organizations are habitually located in urban areas such as Madison and act as watchdogs for environmental pollution in rural areas. They feel the need to protect the environment that is a victim of the villains: the industry. In their turn, farmers feel that these accusations by environmental professionals increasingly harm their business. They respond with adversarial reactions or they withdraw from communication with the rest of the community.

In the United States, the neo-liberal, pluralistic style of decision making encourages the professionalization of the environmental movement. In this style non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) have to lobby, protest, and go to court more frequently than in, for example, the Dutch, neo-corporatist style of decision making (Vogel, 1986; Renn, 1995; Halfman, 2003). The U.S. style of decision making fosters conflict. In comparison to Europe, especially the Netherlands and Germany, but also the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. has a reputation of being more activist and adversarial. Grass roots organizations and other activist organizations have little space for collaborative efforts or cooperative problem solving as they depend more on financial resources from their members. The members often wish to see instant results (Carter, 2007; Roots, 1999; Interview-Hanson, 2004; Interview-Shenot, 2004; Interview-Smoller, 2004). Finally, the ‘imported’ or returning ‘city folk’ who bought parcels of land near farms to build ‘trophy homes’ contributed to the land use conflicts in the communities. These more urban residents ran into conflicts with their farming neighbors (and local residents) as they were not prepared for the sprawl of an industrial farm despite the fact that the farm had already acquired a license from the DNR. These licenses are obligatory for farms with over 1000 animal units (Wisconsin Act 235, 2003; Farm Act, 2002). This randomness causes uncertainties for both farmers and their neighbors. A third difficulty in the application of the command and control system is that the DNR has experienced a lack of manpower and financial resources that makes it more difficult to conduct sufficient on-site inspections (Interview-Shenot, 2005; Interview-Eggert, 2004; Interview-Smoller, 2004) and why it received the nickname of “Department of No Resources” (Interview-Skadden, 2004).

Some actors in state government and stakeholders from industry and NGO’s acknowledge the limits of environmental regulations for the dairy sector and for other businesses such as electric generating plants, paper mills, or the scrap metal industry. For example, in 1997, the Department of Natural Resources, as a member of the Multi-State Working Group on Environmental Performance (MSWG) that consisted of representatives from government, business and environment established a list of “policy gaps” and “unmet environmental needs” (Policy statement DNR George Meyer, 1999) (see figure 4.1).

The MSWG concluded that only 20% of the environmental aspects of businesses were regulated and that 80% of the aspects caused “problems and opportunities” (Policy statement DNR George Meyer, 1999). Despite its inaccuracy, this chart illustrates that the environmental regulatory landscape of Wisconsin can be considered relatively empty.

In addition to this increasingly complex situation, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) experiences difficulties with the “command and control” of pollution by the agricultural industry. There are several reasons for this. First, it is hard to prove non-point source pollution. This is pollution of air or water that is diffused. Regulators use the term “non-point” to describe sources of pollution that are individually small, but numerous enough that cumulatively they can have a large impact. The second reason is the relative novelty of smart growth plans and regional or state zoning plans. Nature conservation areas or areas for development are not planned for as intensely as in the Netherlands. This sometimes leads to random policies for farm expansion, especially in combination with relatively powerful town boards that can refuse the location or expansion of an industrial farm despite the fact that the farm had already acquired a license from the DNR. These licenses are obligatory for farms with over 1000 animal units (Wisconsin Act 235, 2003; Farm Act, 2002). This randomness causes uncertainties for both farmers and their neighbors. A third difficulty in the application of the command and control system is that the DNR has experienced a lack of manpower and financial resources that makes it more difficult to conduct sufficient on-site inspections (Interview-Shenot, 2005; Interview-Eggert, 2004; Interview-Smoller, 2004) and why it received the nickname of “Department of No Resources” (Interview-Skadden, 2004).
lot of progress in going after the villains, that this next generation of environmental challenge is more complex. And we’ve got to find other tools for these complexities” (Interview-Smoller, 2004).

The environmental pollution caused by farms; the more adversarial relationships among farmers; an increase in conflicts between farmers and neighbors; the professionalized environmental NGOs; and the strategically produced chart that pointed out the policy gaps for environmental solutions; these all were reason for the Department of Natural Resources to start consensus building and the formation of public entrepreneurship networks (Laws 1998, Laws et al 2001) in the Northeast of Wisconsin. “The competing visions of the rural idea” (interview-Bellman, 2004) that caused conflict in this area might be mediated and resolved.

The idea of consensus building was also applied in the Green Tier Law. This law at first was not directly related to the Dairy Gateway project but in the course of the project became more important. Wisconsin Act 267 is the official name of the Green Tier Law. This law adds an extra tier to normal environmental regulations. It encourages voluntary actions and does not prohibit and punish pollution but gives incentives to businesses to voluntary strive for a “superior environmental performance” (DNR, 2004e; DNR-CEA, 2006). The Green Tier law offers a carrot rather than a stick, and as such this law was the first of its kind. A Wisconsin scholar in policy analysis typified this law as a transplantation of a neo-corporatist style of decision-making in a pluralistic context (Wilson, April 2002).

The Green Tier law was also Wisconsin’s first law drafted in a consensus-building process (Wilson, April 2002; Arts and Amengual, 2004). Representatives from industry, environmental organizations and government formed a Green Tier Advisory Committee and they collaboratively constructed a proposal for this law. This consensus building process was a bumpy road. Environmental NGO’s and some people in government were afraid the bill would enable regulatory relief and, as Senator Mark Miller said: “the environmental community [was] concerned that it [would] weaken compliance” (Interview-Miller, 2005; Amengual, 2005).

Despite the controversies about this law, the governor signed the final version in April 2004. The law was operational from that date until the end of 2009 and it was reauthorized on the July 8, 2009. The Green Tier program became permanent with the signing of Wisconsin Act 30. The law consists of two programs: the environmental results program and the environmental improvement program (State of Wisconsin, 2004). The DNR executes both programs. The environmental results program enables state government to provide incentives, for example, businesses that can demonstrate that they go beyond environmental regulations to improve their environmental performance can display a logo and undergo the minimum number of required inspections (State of Wisconsin, 2004). Businesses or associations that want to enter the program can do so in two steps. In the first step they are required to have a clean environmental enforcement record and have to implement or commit to implementing within a year a monitoring and auditing system, an environmental management system (EMS) to track and record their environmental improvements. To enter tier II, the EMS has to be operational and the business “has demonstrated a record of ‘superior environmental performance’ and will maintain or improve this performance” (State of Wisconsin, 2004). Benefits for the participants in Tier II have not been specified, but the DNR is directed to create incentives “proportionate to the environmental benefits” (State of Wisconsin, 2004).

The environmental improvement program is the second part of this act. It provides the means to consider violations not as deliberate, but as mistakes that need time to be corrected. This part of the law “encourages regulated entities to check their compliance with environmental regulations and correct any violations discovered during their audits” (State of Wisconsin, 2004). It enables the DNR, in cooperation with the Department of Justice, to punish environmental violations in a less severe manner than under normal current law. As the law states: “a participant that corrected the violations in a timely manner may not be required to forfeit more than $500 for each violation, regardless of the number of days during which the violation continues” (State of Wisconsin, 2004).

Businesses that want to enter the green tier program sign individual contracts with the DNR but they also can engage in a charter with, for example, a business association or a factory and its individual suppliers. Such an association of, for example, cheese factories, signs a contract with the DNR and all its members are required to enter Green Tier and have an EMS. The association of factories takes care of the yearly monitoring and auditing of the EMS. They can become an accredited third party or they can hire a third party. The DNR audits the monitoring once every three years (DNR-CEA, 2004).

The DNR Bureau for Cooperative Environmental Assistance (CEA) prepared this law in the Environmental Cooperation Pilot that started in 1999. In this Pilot Program six businesses developed a cooperative agreement with DNR-CEA. In 2002, two years before the law was officially signed, agricultural applications for Green Tier came in, and DNR-CEA and the University of Wisconsin explored the possibilities of drafting EMS’s for agriculture.

4.2. THE DAIRY GATEWAY PROJECT

In 2002, DNR-CEA, in cooperation with employees of the State Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), scholars of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Pennsylvania Law School, the LaFollette School of the University of Wisconsin, the local NGO Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership (LNRP) and the environmental consulting firm Madison Environmental Group (MEG) drafted a proposal for the Dairy Gateway project. This project was to be located in the Northeast of Wisconsin — the Dairy Gateway area — and had to build a “public entrepreneurship network” (Laws 1998, Laws et al. 2001) among farmers, neighbors and others. This proposal was submitted to the Joyce Foundation, a philanthropic organization in Chicago that is, among other issues, concerned with the water quality of the Great Lakes. In the spirit of the Green Tier concept, this coalition agreed that adversarial types of interactions between the dairy business, citizens, and environmental organizations in Wisconsin needed to change into cooperative ones. A change in relationships might prevent and resolve land-use conflicts, improve environmental quality, especially the quality of ground and surface water, and maintain an economically viable dairy sector in the area. This change coalition agreed that the command and control system and the attempts of farmers to
improve their environmental performance were not sufficient. They believed that a change in relationships would lead to more sustainable and better environmental results and to a more sustainable community.

In Wisconsin there was not one event that triggered this project as had been the case in the Bijlmerpark. In this case a group of actors that usually have conflicting interests agreed that the conflicts needed to be prevented or solved in order to improve the environmental performance of the state. Encouraged by academics and government, they stated their ambition to achieve a “sustainable community, environment and economy” (DNR, 2003). The Green Tier concept provided a framework for this group to start the Dairy Gateway project, which in its turn was also a way for the DNR to promote the concept. The Dairy Gateway project intended to stimulate “voluntary compliance to self-created environmental standards by networks between farmers, government and possibly networks of environmental organizations and processors of products” (DNR, 2003, Joyce Foundation grant application). In the grant application to the Joyce Foundation, the objectives of this project were stated as follows:

“The Dairy Gateway is a project to develop grass roots networks linking profitable farms and quality community life, and translate that insight into actions that all must do so all can gain. The project will engage local stakeholders to develop a vision for the project area and to seek consensus on specific commitments and programs that foster economic growth, environmental gain and community participation. [...] New leaders will emerge, with entrepreneurs dedicated to continual engagement and improvement maintaining a constructive dialogue even when the problems seem most difficult” (DNR, 2003, grant application Joyce Foundation).

In 2003, the Joyce Foundation agreed to co-finance the Dairy Gateway project. They contributed in two rounds: from April 2003 until April 2004 (Joyce-Foundation, 2003) and from April 2005 until April 2006 (Joyce-Foundation, 2005, Joyce-Foundation, 2005; www.thejoycefdn.org). Both rounds contained a “lakeshore basin-wide granting program” through which the local organization Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership (LNRP) disseminated financial resources among local network initiatives that improved the water quality in the area. Only the first round financed a farm/neighbor meeting process “for the purposes of inserting dialogue as an additional recourse to a community when local environmental concerns conflict with agricultural practices” (DNR, 2004a, executive summary). These Farm-Neighbor Meetings (FNM) were meetings that had a deliberative design. At these meetings participants engaged in a dialogue and a joint inquiry into farm practices that improve the environmental quality of the farms and the area (DNR, 2004a, FNM Program).

In 2003 the first round of the Dairy Gateway project started. Two local mediators, Nancy Skadden from the LNRP and Harry Weis-Behrman from Wisconsin Environmental Initiative (WEI) (see attachment 4.4. for overview of project structure), organized and facilitated deliberations between farmers, their neighbors, and environmental organizations in the three counties and at the statewide level. They received support from two Harvard-trained mediators that advised on the deliberative design and conducted a "convening assessment" that explored the problems in the area. Ms Skadden first held numerous interviews and attended several local and state meetings that concerned the dairy industry (DNR, 2004a). Next, she organized twelve farm-to-farm and farm-to-neighbor meetings. At these meetings farmers deliberated with farmers and government (6 meetings), and owners of small, medium and large farms deliberated with their neighbors (6 meetings). In the second round of the project the other local mediator (from WEI) organized three statewide meetings. Those were attended by farmers’ representatives and environmental NGO’s, including Midwest Environmental Advocates. The Department of Agriculture organized one more farmer-to-farmer meeting. In both rounds, the facilitator applied ‘mediation’ as the deliberative design at the farmer-to-neighbor meetings. At the statewide convening, the facilitator applied consensus building as a design to encourage deliberations.

At the six farmer-to-neighbor meetings on three different farms, farmers and neighbors developed hands-on solutions for environmental problems. At three farmer-to-farmer meetings, farmers in cooperation with government representatives worked toward the development of individual environmental management systems (EMS’s). Two meetings took place in 2004 and one in 2005. The statewide convening consisted of three meetings. These were all organized in 2005. At those meetings farmers and environmentalists collaboratively constructed generic environmental standards for voluntary on-farm environmental improvements. For example, participants talked about performance on manure spreading, manure digesting, reduction of hazardous waste, and prevention of soil erosion. Farmers that participated in the Dairy Gateway project or wanted to enter the Green Tier program could include these standards in their specific environmental management systems. Moreover, these standards could be used in the monitoring and auditing of the EMS’s of participating farms. At all these meetings, the neighbors, environmentalists and farmers, together with government officials, deliberated on how to collaboratively encourage more environmentally friendly farm practices (see attachment 4.5. for an overview of the data generated for the Dairy Gateway project, and attachment 4.6. for the participants in all meetings).

Out of these meetings I constructed two sites of interaction. The first site of interaction was that between government and society. These interactions took place in the local farmer-to-neighbor meetings and a statewide convening. The second site of interactions was that between government and businesses. These interactions took place at the farmer-to-farmer meetings. Subsequently, I analyzed interactions between government and advisors. These interactions mostly took place in the design team. They met a few times and held conference calls at the start of the project. This design team interacted closely with members of what later became the Investors Club. This was very different from the Bijlmerpark-case — and as we will see, from the Protein Corridor — in which societal actors were not included in the drafting of the design of the project.

I analyzed boundary work in documents and meetings that took place or were produced between the drafting of the proposal in 2002 and the last farmer-to-farmer meeting in October 2005 in Cleveland, Wisconsin. At this last meeting farmers of different size dairy operations agreed to start building and implementing an EMS to be able to enter a green tier contract. It was not until 2006 that the results of the state wide convening materialized in a document (DNR-CEA, 2006). I included this document in the analysis. In 2007 the Dairy Business Association-Green Tier Advancement Project (DBA-GTAP) signed a charter with DNR for their members in the dairy sector. In 2009 the DNR presented the first environmental results of the Green Tier program.
4.3. BOUNDARY WORK IN THE DAIRY GATEWAY PROJECT

This section contains the results of the analysis of boundary work in the Dairy Gateway region. It first presents the results of boundary work in a group of stakeholders that DNR-CEA put together to form what I call, a change coalition, that would later become the Investors’ Club. Second, this section presents the results of boundary work at the venues that mediators designed to convene deliberations between government and society and between government and businesses. The change coalition that was formed in the first stage inserted elements of deliberative governance discourse at these venues.

BOUNDARY WORK IN THE FIRST STAGE

In the first stage of the project these actors built and established their coalition. According to the writers of the proposal, this new way of thinking was distinct since it involved “the Door Peninsula – and its philosophical gateway into a new way of thinking about economic, community and environmental issues.” In the first stage of the project these actors built and established their coalition. They did so by discussing and defining what I call deliberative governance discourse. As we will see, the formation of the change coalition took place through boundary work on deliberative governance discourse. Some participants, mostly governmental actors and academics, attempted to gain credibility for this discourse. Boundary work in this stage followed this pattern: first, some members of the potential change coalition deliberated about the meaning of the boundary concept “dialogue” that they simultaneously demarcated from conflict, and that I consider an element of government discourse. Second, the members of the change coalition defined and elaborated the boundary concept “stewardship.” Third, they demarcated “academic expertise” and “foreign experience” — both concepts we consider elements of science discourse — to gain credibility for dialogue and stewardship in interactions with the Joyce Foundation and other potential coalition members.

Demarcation of dialogue from conflict

In the grant application to the Joyce Foundation, the DNR-CEA described the Dairy Gateway project as “a literal gateway to Wisconsin’s most notable geographic feature – the Door Peninsula – and its philosophical gateway into a new way of thinking about the community and environment” (DNR, 2003, grant application Joyce Foundation). According to the writers of the proposal, this new way of thinking was distinct since it considered the ecosystem as interconnected rather than as isolated problems of water, air, and soil pollution. Moreover, it would facilitate civic entrepreneurship, which means that community members would voluntarily improve their environmental performance, rather than merely meet minimal environmental requirements (DNR, 2003 grant application Joyce Foundation). To facilitate this entrepreneurship, the DNR-CEA wanted to organize stakeholder engagement and:

“Out of this stakeholder engagement to develop and implement stakeholder-based management processes that provide economic growth, environmental gain and community participation. Dairy Gateway Network of the state will grow, linking people throughout the project area and beyond to develop a proactive “yes we can” strategy that examines the region’s diversity of interests and variety of needs. The network will maintain the integrity of those diverse interests but will develop and use new tools to find common ground, establish shared expectations and realize shared goals. New leaders will emerge, with entrepreneurs dedicated to continual engagement in improvement maintaining a constructive dialogue even when the problems seem most difficult” (DNR, 2003, grant application Joyce Foundation).

The design team that consisted of DNR-CEA, MIT and the two Harvard-trained mediation experts formulated the objectives of the project as a reduction of conflict, and a way to recognize “environmental improvements and community-building potential” (Design Team, 2004a). Moreover, the local mediators of LNRP and WEI proposed “dialogue and stakeholder participation.” For example, LNRP argued that “a key component of the Dairy Gateway initiative is to engage stakeholders and involve communities in order to prevent and minimize rural conflicts” (DG Report, Attachment C Scope of Work - Expanding Local Involvement in Dairy Gateway (Grant NMD652)). At the statewide level the mediator proposed to organize “information sharing among participants (and resource people) regarding the opportunities being considered; and to begin to critically examine these possibilities within an atmosphere of respectful, collaborative inquiry” (Webne-Behrman, 2004).

Hence, the local mediators and the design team all brought forward some form of dialogue. They interpreted this boundary concept in several ways, for example, as a community building process or as a collaborative learning effort. The members of the change coalition all preferred dialogue to the normal adversarial relations and conflict. They agreed that to be able to improve environmental quality of the area a dialogue or a collaborative inquiry was necessary. It is striking that the coalition did not formulate a common solution or goal for the environmental problems. Rather, they aimed for different kinds of cooperation or procedures. Subsequently, they proposed a more holistic approach to the environmental problems and solutions in the boundary concept “stewardship.”

Interpreting the boundary concept stewardship

The DNR-CEA, in cooperation with the academics, introduced a second boundary concept in the proposal to the Joyce Foundation: stewardship. This concept established a new interpretation of farmers no longer as polluters, but as protectors of the land. It transcended boundaries between, on one hand, environmental subdiscourse in which all industrial farms are considered the main source of pollution in the area, and on the other hand farming subdiscourse in which environmentalists are viewed as people that want to run farmers out of business. Subsequently, this alteration of the interpretation of farmers also enabled potential members of the change coalition to interpret the interactions between government, businesses and society differently. If farmers are no longer the
main polluters, government can also start to encourage their attempts to improve the environment. If farmers can be stewards, government can engage in a dialogue rather than punish. Moreover, polluters other than the farmers needed to be prosecuted.

Thus, the DNR-CEA and academics argued that environmental problems are not only caused by (industrial) farms but also by other aspects of modernization such as urbanization and an increase in tourism. For example, “[there are threats to] the groundwater resources that are highly vulnerable due to the geology, and surface waters, tributaries to the Great Lakes, that are vulnerable to unplanned growth and commerce” (DNR, 2003, grant application Joyce Foundation, p. 2). Moreover, pollution of ground and surface water would not be solved by regulating only industrial farms. Therefore, the change coalition wanted the quality of ground water and surface water of the lakeshore basin of Lake Michigan to be a communal concern to farmers, environmentalists, citizens, and to government. The rivers and creeks in Wisconsin in a way were liquid threads, a concept that DNR-CEA borrowed from Denny Canef from River Alliance (Interview-McDermid, 2004) that connect farming, urbanization and economic growth in the cause of controlling water pollution. The change coalition translated the problem with control of non-point-source pollution and made clear that it is not only a problem to control this pollution but that it is a problem for the public. For the change coalition, the new “governance” interpretation of the water problem made stewardship a possible solution. Farmers, in cooperation with citizens and possibly NGO’s, together hold the key to better environmental quality that cannot be obtained by governmental measures.

However, the members of the change coalition interpreted stewardship differently, and mostly to their own benefit. Some environmentalists did indeed consider stewardship as a way to engage farmers in protection and conservation of the land. For example, LNRP believed that stewardship could “foster community partnerships, provide funding and a forum for public dialogue, and promote and support other activities that advocate a balance between land use and protection and conservation of our natural resources” (LNRP, 2004d). Some participating farmers interpreted it as a way to make sure they could continue farming rather than sell their land to project developers. For example, stewardship was interpreted as: “[ . . . ] a mission [ . . . ] to save farmland from being permanently converted into something else. And in this country it is almost invariably housing or shopping malls” (Interview-Canef-Denny, 2005).

Moreover, the Joyce Foundation, the funder of the project, emphasized the new regulatory approach and interpreted stewardship as an integral part of the new approach:

“to deal with the non-point source pollution problem and hopefully in a context of continuous improvement that would be beneficial to the farmer as well as to the society. So, it is not just someone on the outside saying: this is what you have to do. But he or she is actually finding efficiencies and, you know, ways to improve material use efficiency and things like that by applying that kind of management approach” (Interview-O’Dell, 2005).

This demarcation of academic expertise and foreign experience supported the ideas of dialogue and stewardship. This was to convince the change coalition, and they left. They did not want to be associated with an interpretation of stewardship that in some way or another stimulated industrial farming.

**Demarcation of academic expertise and foreign experience**

In two more ways the DNR-CEA attempted to gain credibility for the boundary concepts of dialogue and stewardship. They demarcated academic expertise and foreign experiences in the proposals to the Joyce Foundation. I did not come across this type of demarcation in the discussions about the proposals of the local mediators. To gain credibility for the project and the problem definitions and solutions it proposed, the DNR-CEA argued that they will involve academic partners that will “affirm and facilitate the project’s “credibility and replicability” and that they “will manage a learning and sharing system of enduring consequence” (DNR, 2003, grant application Joyce Foundation). Moreover, they would build on previous experiences and experiences from abroad:

“But it is important to note that the [Wisconsin] Partnership will build on experiences and directions already put in place within the Wisconsin agricultural community, which has had a long term relationship with the diary industry in The Netherlands. Indeed, the Wisconsin Agricultural Stewardship Initiative and the Discovery Farms (private farms testing environmental practices) and Pioneer Farm (a systems farm at the UW-Platteville) had their origins in The Netherlands. Through MIT, the Dutch government, universities and private farms will identify and manage, for the generation of best practices and new knowledge, up to three case studies that will complement the Dairy Gateway” (DNR, 2003, grant application Joyce Foundation).

A reason for DNR-CEA to demarcate this type of expertise was that “the Joyce Foundation had never previously given grant money to a state regulatory agency. We wanted to reassure them” (email Shenot, August 2010).

I mention these two demarcations, as they appear to be part of government discourse in which academic expertise is a normal part of the setting of standards for rules and regulations, for example in environmental policies (Halfman, 2003). However, the DNR-CEA supplemented this interpretation of academic expertise with a possibility of involving academic expertise in the creation of a learning system. Thus, academic expertise and experience supported the ideas of dialogue and stewardship. This was to convince the Joyce Foundation of the credibility of these two concepts. At the same time DNR-CEA proposed a different type of involvement of academics: to enhance the learning of all actors, including that of the academics. As such, DNR-CEA introduced a third element of deliberative governance discourse: next to dialogue and stewardship the DNR included expertise and experience.
Conclusions: credible deliberative governance
The DNR-CEA and academics successfully redefined the problems and possible solutions in the area. In this first stage, the DNR and academics convinced other members and the Joyce Foundation of the boundary concepts dialogue and stewardship that I consider part of deliberative governance discourse (see figure 4.2 for an overview of elements of deliberative governance discourse). Moreover, the newly formed change coalition no longer interpreted government solely as a protector, businesses as polluters, and citizens and the environment as the protected. The coalition adopted deliberative governance discourse and believed that all these actors were to act as protectors and engage in a dialogue or learning process. The demarcation of academic expertise and foreign experience stimulated the Joyce Foundations’ acceptance of these boundary concepts. However, potential members of the change coalition also struggled with different interpretations of stewardship in “normal” conversations. When large industrial farms explicitly were included in the project, one potential member of the change coalition no longer interpreted stewardship from an environmentalists’ subdiscourse. This stakeholder left the change coalition. The possible members of the change coalition did engage in “normal” conversations. Their meetings did not have a deliberative design, and I did not come across conversations with a reflective quality.

Introducing boundary concepts and demarcation
The twelve meetings that were part of the Dairy Gateway project all started with the mediators’ introduction of “dialogue” that I consider an element of the new deliberative governance discourse. At the farmer-to-neighbor meetings dialogue was sought in three ways. First, attendees had to sign a Participants’ Agreement in which they promised to engage in a dialogue. The mediator defined dialogue as follows: participants had to “be here if possible; listen; speak truth” (LNRP, 2004c; FNM report 2004-2005). Second, to introduce dialogue, the mediator applied a strategy of indirection (Forester 2000; 2009) and let participants engage in conversations about their community and have them share their rural history. The mediator asked participants not to raise issues of conflict but to start by sharing stories about their history in the community and to tell what they love about rural Wisconsin. For example, the mediator at the first farmer-to-neighbor meeting about the Dairy Dreams farm explicitly demanded: “Let’s leave all the issues of Dairy Dreams out of it right now and just talk about the rest of where you live and why you’re here, and how your life brought you to this place. Let’s just take a minute to get to know each other a little better” (LNRP, 2004a, 1st meeting Dairy Dreams).

Third, the mediator invited participants to sit in a circle. The chairs had to be altered from the normal theater setting in the town hall to a circle that would enable a dialogue. As the mediator explained at one of the meetings: “This is going to be a dialogue, so let’s take all the chairs that no one is sitting on and make a circle so you can see and hear everyone else” (LNRP, 2004a, 1st meeting dairy dreams).

BOUNDARY WORK IN DELIBERATIONS OF GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY
In the second stage of the Dairy Gateway project, facilitators that represented the change coalition convened three types of meetings with a deliberative design: farmer-to-farmer meetings; farmer-to-neighbor meetings; and meetings that were convened statewide. At the three types of meetings, I discerned the following pattern of boundary work:

1. Introduction of the boundary concepts “dialogue” or “learning” and demarcation of them from elements of government discourse ‘conflict’
2. Contextualizing the boundary concept ‘stewardship’
3. Struggles about interpretation of boundary concepts: reflective conversation or conflict?
4. Credible deliberative governance discourse?

A close look at boundary work at these two sites of interaction demonstrated that variations in this pattern took place.
Stewardship at the farmer-to-neighbor meetings: practical solutions

At the farmer-to-neighbor meetings generally a farmer or sometimes the mediator injected stewardship into a situation in which farmers usually were defined as polluters. To gain credibility for this introduction the mediator or farmer immediately gave an example of practical environmental solutions that the farmer had performed, or was going to develop. Sometimes these were very simple solutions, such as self-regulating the spreading of manure:

"Pollution is also a problem. Because of a larger quantity of livestock more chemicals are used. The Olson’s are aware that the smell of liquid manure is offensive and attempt to spread [it] when the wind is favorable."

The farmers also discussed bigger and more costly solutions with their neighbors such as the use of straw covers on manure pits or the placement of a digester. At all these farmer-to-neighbor meetings, it was the farmers who first demonstrated their stewardship to convince the neighbors that change was feasible. The farmers that enacted or performed their stewardship in this way helped to convince the neighbors of the credibility of the boundary concept. These neighbors altered their interpretation of farmers and their subdiscourse. This way deliberative governance discourse gained credibility.

Stewardship at the farmer-to-farmer meetings: EMS

At the farmer-to-farmer meetings, the mediator, a governmental actor, or an expert introduced stewardship. Experts came either from the University of Wisconsin (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco) or from a private firm (EMS-meeting, 2005). These actors translated stewardship by accompanying it with a more formal tool that would enable farmers to demonstrate their concern for the environment: the environmental management system (EMS). This system had to convince government, the farmers’ neighbors, town officials, and environmental organizations that the farmers could be stewards of the land. The environmental management system was a way to facilitate a transition toward the deliberative governance discourse as it combined some form of government control with farmers’ voluntary efforts and environmental improvement targeted by environmental NGO’s.

At the farmer-to-farmer meetings, the farmers first had to be convinced that this tool could benefit them. The mediator had to alter the farmers’ interpretations of government instruments. Their normal “government” interpretation is that government comes in and tells them what to do and either shares their costs for putting these measures in place or punishes them if they don’t comply. In this case, farmers had to be convinced that governmental actors or the experts introduced the EMS as an instrument to help farmers set their own environmental goals, and to monitor and audit them. The mediator and experts argued that this would lead to better environmental performance, to social and governmental acceptance of the farmers as stewards, and it would have financial benefits.

At the farmer-to-farmer meetings, members of the change coalition presented what I analyzed to be three distinct interpretations of the EMS to farmers. First, the EMS was a social license to operate. Participation in the Dairy Gateway project and the development of an EMS would give farmers more easily societal and government approval of their operation. Through a logo or a label and the acknowledgement of the DNR that a farm had superior environmental performance, the public would be able to better trust these

Contextualizing the boundary concept stewardship

After the mediators introduced dialogue and learning, they or other participants brought up the concept of stewardship. At each type of meeting the mediator, an expert or a farmer contextualized this concept. They interpreted it and made it appropriate to the participants of that meeting and gave concrete examples of stewardship. For example, at the farmer-to-neighbor meetings, farmers interpreted stewardship as practical solutions for environmental problems. At the farmer-to-farmer meeting an academic expert introduced the EMS as a form of stewardship. At the statewide level the mediator introduced generic environmental standards – to be applied in EMS’s – as a translation of stewardship.

it as sharing. Mediators and participants often mentioned the word ‘sharing’. For example, a mediator would start the meeting with a description of the objective and explain that “we had in mind that there might be a way that an organization of farmers might work together to put together environmental sharing among the farmers (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004). Second, participants interpreted learning as a communal search by government, experts and farmers into the benefits, difficulties and adaptations of environmental management systems to improve environmental performance of farms.” Experts, governmental actors, farmers and also, preferably, environmental organizations needed to align their knowledge to be able to improve environmental performance. Actors from government or the involved experts acknowledged explicitly that they were in need of information from farmers to be able to improve their own practices. For example, a DATCP employee at the start of a farmer-to-farmer meeting said “So, it is a learning process. EMS’es are extremely rare in agriculture in Wisconsin, it is a learning process” (EMS-meeting, 2005). This also implied that government was not coming in to tell farmers what environmental measures they should take. In this project, government was to make an effort with farmers to improve their environmental performance. For example, as the DNR project caretaker emphasized in 2004:

“Do we have a model laid out for you guys and say, ‘Here’s the model, go follow it?’ NO. That is really inconsistent with the whole idea behind Green Tier which is sitting around the table like we’re doing today and talking about what are the possibilities and how do we get there from where we are” (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco).

The participants of the farmer-to-farmer meetings did not contest this learning effort and indeed, after the explanation of what an EMS is (see next step) engaged in an exploration of the pros and cons of environmental improvements.

In the statewide convening, the mediator also demarcated the boundary concept “learning” from conflict. As with the farmer-to-neighbor meetings, at the statewide level participants engaged in a conversation that focused attention on the commonalities in the group rather than on the differences. The mediator invited participants of the statewide convening to share their core values. In other words to talk about what they believed to be important in Wisconsin’s economy, agriculture and environment. These core values were “shared by group members with one another, so they may be understood as guides to individuals’ participation in the discussions of strategies to be recommended” (Webne-Boehman, 2005a). These shared core values at the statewide meeting helped participants transcend the boundaries between their conflicting interpretations of environmental quality or business quality. The sharing of core values, as a strategy of indirectness, enabled participants to begin the transition toward a deliberative governance discourse.

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farmers. As the project caretaker argued:

“We talk about the social license to operate. I mean, businesses and other operations need legal licenses to operate but you also need to get the social approval of the town governments and your neighbors . . . .” (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco)

To convince farmers of this interpretation of the EMS, some members of the change coalition argued that the quality of the EMS resides in the fact that it is a track and tracing system. It enables a gathering of facts rather than arguments. It is a “system” and not a plan, it is a “process” and not a “project” (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco). The expert argued that this information-gathering allows improving relationships with the community and government. For example, as a DATCP employee argued:

“[…] the EMS process is based on an international standard called ISO 14001. ISO 14001 came out of Europe […] basically saying: ‘here is a way that if you behave with respect to your business, your business will be more successful, it will be more integrated, it will be a network. So, if you do one project you see the effects across your whole business. And you can also explain those effects to your neighbors, to your government regulators, whoever needs to see your operation, can see it relatively transparent. Rather than deal with perceptions you can deal with some realities” (EMS-meeting, 2005).

A third interpretation of an EMS was to consider it an instrument to increase financial benefits. Due to the social license that separates them from other farms, farmers with an EMS will be able to charge more for their products. For example, as a DATCP employee argued:

“What DATCP is interested in, is the small cheese plant would have a [label] that would include the producers. So, the producers would be performing to their best environmental performance […] and then you put that on a label of a cheese product that says: this product is produced in an environmentally friendly manner and you will get a price that will get you additional dollars back and that will increase their pay price” (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco)

To convince farmers to develop an individual EMS the mediator and other members of the change coalition also introduced actors that have “expertise about” or “experience with” these ways of working. For example, at both farmer-to-farmer meetings two experts elaborated on the EMS. At the first meeting this was a researcher from the University of Wisconsin. At the second meeting in 2005, two consultants from a firm that specialized in ISO 14001 training and certification were invited. In both cases, they introduced themselves as ‘experts’ on the environmental management system. For example, one of the participating experts explained:

“I worked in the environmental field for about 6,7, maybe 8 years now. I graduated with a degree in Madison, in [civil] environmental engineering, but I have mainly done environmental work in industry. And now also other organizations [such as] home builders, developers, dairy farmers…” (EMS-meeting, 2005).

To convince farmers to start working with an EMS the mediators also invited experienced farmers. For example:

“it is to me…maybe I can summarize it quoting Ken. He was asked a question last week: […] the question was do you see value in Green Tier in marketing products and how can you use Green Tier? Ken answered that ‘I am going to use it to stay in business.’ I thought, man, that is right on the money.”(EMS-meeting, 2005).

The mediators gave examples of experiences with EMS outside the farming community, for example, for scrap metal recyclers or home builders (EMS-meeting, 2005). As we will see, these experiences and the participation of experts did not prevent struggles about the interpretation of stewardship and the EMS.

Stewardship at the Statewide Convening: generic environmental standards

At the Statewide Convening, the change coalition attempted to gain credibility for the interpretation of farmers as stewards of the land. In order to achieve this, they introduced a contextualized version of stewardship: generic environmental standards. Participants were to collaboratively develop these standards, which were to define “superior environmental performance” (DNR-CEA, 2006, p. 8). The change coalition sketched the contours of this generic EMS. These contours created a sphere of engagement for participants at the statewide convention. Unfortunately, the notes of the mediator and the minutes of the statewide meetings only present the outcomes of these interactions, that is, the standards that were developed. Therefore I cannot present possible interpretations of these standards. I can only conclude that the generic standards could be used as guidelines or minimum requirements to enter Green Tier. Moreover, governmental actors or third parties might use these minimum requirements to monitor and audit whether environmental improvements that individual farmers aimed for indeed contributed to improve their environmental performance and led to improved environmental results in Wisconsin.

This collaborative effort to formulate standards in itself illustrates a shift from government discourse to deliberative governance discourse; in the normal situation government, together with scientists, would set the environmental standards. In this new situation, government included farmers and environmental organizations to set standards. These generic standards not only gave farmers an instrument to self-regulate, as we saw above, but they also gave some control to the environmental organizations and government over this self-regulation. This makes the application of an EMS more credible, not only to the environmentalists and government but also to the farmers.

Struggles about stewardship: reflective conversation or conflict?

After the introduction of stewardship and EMS, a critical moment occurred at all three types of meetings. When participants of the three types of meetings deliberated on the contextualized boundary concepts, two types of conversations evolved. Some participants engaged in a reflective conversation in which they talked about the differences between their “normal” — what I call government — interpretations and the new interpretation. Other participants began a conflict about different interpretations of stewardship. In these cases stewardship became a fracture line concept that drew out differences between interpretations.
4. Dairy Gateway project: credible learning and stewardship

Struggles about stewardship at the farmer-to-neighbor meetings

At one out of six farmer-to-neighbor meetings where the farm were of medium size (400 cows), the farmers’ stewardship was immediately acknowledged. At five out of six farmer-to-neighbor meetings, the neighbors contested the possibility of stewardship of farmers. At four out of six meetings, participants accepted farmers as good stewards or they used humor in their dialogue about stewardship. At the same time they deliberated on the failure of these attempts. This enabled a collaborative search for better solutions. For example regarding the flow of electricity that might be produced with the digester:

Neighbor: “Wouldn’t it be a more consistent flow [of electricity] than if you would be dependent on the wind?”

Farmer: “Yes, there is variability in the flow. But it’s uh, obviously, manure is constant. So it should be more uniform in its function. Uhm.”


Participants contested the idea of farmers being stewards most severely when discussing manure spills that had happened in the past. These spills can cause water contamination and odor nuisance. Especially when there had been incidents in the past, the conversation ran the risk of evolving into a conflict style of conversation. For example, at one of the farmer-to-neighbor meetings, conflict was brought back to the table when one of the neighbors expressed her concern about the manure spills that she believed had grown more severe since the establishment of the industrial farm:

Gaby: “I agree with both of you but my concern is the water. I live on [X], Junior and Blossom live on the farm. It is 110 years old. They raised six children there, they had their own farm, they had cows. Two years now, the first year [since the industrial farm was established], Willard’s water […] turned color. There is always run off. This year, last year, it was undrinkable. We let it go. This year again you put manure on that field right before the rain. Junior and Tom’s water was contaminated. They could not use their well. Willard and his daughter were both ill. Willard’s 91 years old. Who cares about a 91-year-old man? He had a heart attack. It could be he’s just sick. Junior has a very bad heart. He is not going to cause any problems. I think you went over there and looked at it, talked to him, Josh [farmer]? Did you look at the runoff?” (LNRP, 2004a, minutes of 1st meeting DD).

The farmer acknowledged this concern, but responded that he did not feel that they could be identified as the source of the pollution (LNRP 2004a, minutes of 1st meeting DD). In doing this, the farmer reasserted the problem of non-point source pollution in which it is hard to prove who polluted. The farmer no longer acted as a steward. In response, the neighbor got more adversarial.

To make sure conflict would not continue, the mediator referred to the earlier introduced ‘dialogue’ concept:

“I just want to review that it’s probably important that we be as non confrontive as possible to get as much information. Thank you” (LNRP 2004a, minutes of 1st meeting DD).

This interruption altered the conversation and turned it back to a deliberative one. The farmer and neighbor explored collaboratively possible solutions. They agreed that the farmer would not spread manure when the snow was melting.

At none of the farmer-to-neighbor meetings did the conflicts run out of control. Rather, participants decided to continue their dialogue. They became agonists rather than antagonists.
doing it, all of this is gonna do no good (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco).

In response, the EMS experts gave examples of how public involvement in the development and monitoring of an EMS would solve that problem too. If the public would be involved in drafting the EMS, especially on subjects where they have knowledge, for example, wildlife habitat, this might benefit the farm. The EMS expert proposed that they no longer consider the public as adversarial but as complementary:

"Like with this wildlife stuff I mentioned, umh, you guys aren't the experts on upland birds or whatever. You get people out there to help you think about that and all of a sudden they’ve become a spokesman for all this wildlife stuff not you. There is this birdwatcher that says: you know you have this Pagel farm, we have a project going on and there is a hundred so and so [... this spring, you know. That is gonna be some huge stuff" (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco).

After some deliberation, one of the farmers concluded that this type of public involvement, or at least the logo to prove the stewardship of farmers might work as a social license:

"So, if you have that logo up there and you have been audited, then, I think, that just in itself that means a lot [...] They know that you are doing, they see you putting manure on the field. They have confidence that you are doing it properly because you are being audited" (Farmer-to-farmer meeting, 2004, Casco).

The farmers’ reflective conversations about the interpretations of the EMS paved the road for them to act as stewards. At the end of all meetings, and especially at the last meeting, farmers collaboratively started to explore how they can be stewards. They summed up several practices to implement, for example, to go beyond minimum required levels of soil erosion (= tolerable soil erosion), to save energy, to set water quality goals for the lakeshore basin; to encourage variety in wildlife habitat (Farmer-to-farmer-meeting, 2004, Casco). At the last farmer-to-farmer meeting this resulted in a collaborative effort to enter a process to formulate individual EMS’s for each farmer.

No struggles at the Statewide Convening

In so far as I can judge based on the analysis of minutes of meetings and the final report from 2006, participants at the statewide convention did not engage in a reflective conversation. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that participants enacted both government and deliberative governance discourse. The deliberative governance discourse that they enacted was not only discursive. I interpret the mixed composition of the group and their engagement as “experts” in a collaborative search for policy priorities as a shift toward a deliberative governance discourse. Participants cooperated to generate all types of environmental standards that went beyond normal rules and regulations. At the same time participants enacted government discourse when they all demanded more transparency of governmental rules and regulations, and better governmental rules and regulations. For example, the top priority that these participants agreed on was:

"There needs to be better enforcement of existing laws and enhanced monitoring and BMP [best management practices] enforcement from all agencies. BMP’s need to be continued after funding ceases” (FNM report DNR-LNRP, 2004).

This was prioritized collaboratively, which meant that farmers and environmentalists agreed on it. At the statewide meetings participants agreed that it was government’s responsibility to enforce regulations. Thus, all stakeholders demanded reinforcement of the command and control system and enacted these elements of government discourse. They also produced several minimum requirements of environmental improvements before diary producers could be granted a logo. This was an enactment of an element of deliberative governance discourse.

Collaborative inquiry and agenda setting

After the critical moment in the previous step, the fourth and last step at the three types of meetings was that participants engaged in collaborative agenda setting and did this in a reflective way. Participants collaboratively established the issues that should be dealt with, what experts should be involved, and what time-line they would follow. They enacted this element of deliberative governance discourse and they continued dialogue and the learning process. Participants at the three different types of meetings also transcended discursive boundaries between their subdiscourses when they further explored how stewardship should be interpreted.

At the farmer-to-neighbor meetings and the Statewide Convening the participants established the credibility of the deliberative governance discourse in a similar way. The mediators encouraged them to avoid conflict and to engage in dialogue and learning. At all meetings participants agreed to this. However, at one farmer-to-neighbor meeting the participants agreed that issues had been solved and for now they need not continue dialogue. In the Statewide Convening in this last step, participants agreed that this had been a fruitful way to cooperate. In the final report, one of the seven suggestions was to “continue collaboration” (Webne-Behrman, 2005a; 2005b). Hence, at the end of the meetings, both at the farmer-to-neighbor meetings and at the Statewide Convening participants agreed to continue dialogue and learning.

Moreover, at both sorts of meetings participants agreed to continue to explore the meaning of stewardship. For example, the participants of the Statewide Convening reproduced the idea of stewardship in four of their collaboratively established recommendations to improve and monitor farmers’ environmental performance. In addition, they made two suggestions to government to facilitate stewardship: to invest more in planning by changing a part of the Federal Farm Bill, and to move away from production incentive payments to conservation enhancing payments (Webne-Behrman, 2005a).

It was interesting that at all farmer-to-neighbor meetings it was the farmers that first had to re-emphasize that they were committed to stewardship and that they wanted to continue dialogue with the neighbors. One of the industrial farmers strongly connected this to the sustainability of the community:

“We don’t want to cause problems for anyone else and want to be here and happy with our neighbors. Nothing is more precious than having good friends and good neighbors. There are times when we rely on each other a lot. It’s a system that takes care of itself if everyone works together, like a church group, club, or organization” (LNRP 2004, minutes of 2nd meeting Olson farm).

At most meetings the neighbors confirmed that the farmer was a steward of the land and of their community. Most of the neighbors felt confident that they would be able to continue this type of interaction with their neighboring farm.

Subsequently, when farmers, neighbors, and governmental actors could not resolve issues, they agreed on how to proceed after the meeting. The mediator initiated this agenda, stating that all meetings would consist of three points: what issues are going to be discussed, who needs to be invited, and what experts need to be included? For example, at one farmer-to-
neighbor meeting a farmer announced that he was going to apply for a permit to expand the farm and that “issues” in the community with this expansion could be addressed at the next meeting (LNRP, 2004b, Fenendael farm). At another meeting, all participants agreed to collectively monitor odor nuisance and improve the solutions of the farmer to reduce it. The farmer planned to test a straw cover of the manure pit to reduce the nuisance (LNRP, 2004a, Dairy Dreams).

In addition to the issues, the mediators initiated reflective conversations about how dialogue and learning should be continued. For example, participants discussed who should be involved, what experts were acceptable, and why. The next excerpt gives an example of how participants in one farmer-to-neighbor meeting established who was an acceptable expert.

Mediator: “[...] a couple of times people have said, ‘Well I don’t know this,’ or ‘I don’t know that.’ It seems to me that if we’re going to resolve situations, we need to have as much specific information about each situation as we can [...] I mean the farmer can’t make a difference unless we know specifically what we’re talking about. At the next meeting I would like to invite DB to be here. He’s the DNR person who’s in charge of things like this. He will not be here in a role as someone to enforce things or do things, but he will be an enormous amount of information for us (LNRP 2004, minutes of 1st meeting DD).

This proposal to invite a DNR employee, even though the mediator explained that the expert’s role at this meeting was to be different from his normal role as an enforcer, was successfully contested by both the neighbors and the farmers:

“Well, as you mention DB, I sort of looked around the room and I saw at least five sets of eyes roll. A lot of people in this room have some experience with DB and it has not been a good experience” (LNRP 2004, minutes of 2nd meeting DD).

After this remark, the participants agreed that this DNR person was not welcome. However, they did accept a proposal of an industrial farmer to invite a local conservation agent:

Industrial farmer: “[...] and TK, you know if anybody wanted somebody else to come up, he’d be a good guy to ask questions of, being a field unit man, if we were going to continue to bring somebody else in. He doesn’t have to, he’s not a DB [DNR] or AW [Conservation Agent], he’s a field unit guy. I mean he’s got a 30-cow farm south of Kewaunee, so he understands” (LNRP 2004, minutes of 2nd meeting DD).

This agent was more credible to the participants, as he was not part of the DNR and perhaps more importantly, he was an experiential expert since he has experience as a farm owner.

Hence, at the statewide meetings and at all farmer-to-neighbor meetings, the participants agreed to continue the deliberations. Indeed, at the local level indeed several meetings followed. I do not know if after the three statewide meetings, this group continued to meet but I expect not with the same composition nor with an agenda that continued the learning process.

At the farmer-to-farmer meetings, the mediator encouraged farmers to collaboratively set the agenda for the next meetings and to agree in what fashion and with what timeline they would further develop the environmental management systems. The farmers responded with some reservations, for example, they argued that they needed to speak to other farmers before they could promise anything. However, at both meetings they also decided to proceed with the development of an EMS. For example, they agreed to design generic EMS’s for three different sizes of farms. These could serve as an example to other farmers:

“I think what we need to do is to build a general EMS program and then, I’m just going to throw an idea out: we’re going to design a general EMS program for Thomas [small] and Dave [medium-sized] and my [large] farm and then we’ll try to put that together and see if that would work in tier, whatever it is, 1 or 2 or 3” (Farmer-to-farmer meeting Casco, 2004).

At the farmer-to-farmer meeting in Cleveland a year later, farmers took more steps to continue the development and implementation of EMS’s. As such they gave substance and commitment to their role as stewards of the land. Already a couple of farms had developed and implemented an EMS, and at this meeting more farmers were persuaded to implement one. Participants set up an EMS training schedule.

At all three types of meetings, the mediators facilitated the enactment of dialogue, learning and stewardship. At the end of the meetings, participants agreed to continue a dialogue or the learning effort. In most cases farmers, in cooperation with their neighbors, governmental actors and even environmental organizations, further explored how they could be good stewards, and as such participants enacted this boundary concept also.

Conclusions: enactment of stewardship, dialogue and learning

In deliberations between government and society that in this case consisted of the farmer-to-neighbor meetings and the Statewide Convening, and in deliberations of government and businesses in the case of farmer-to-farmer meetings, the mediators or other actors introduced the boundary concepts of dialogue and stewardship. From the above, I can conclude that participants for the most part engaged in reflective conversations and enacted the dialogue concept without any doubt. There was but one example of a meeting in which conflict occurred, and as I did not observe the statewide meetings I cannot conclude what type of conversation took place.

Dialogue and learning

The mediators adapted the boundary concepts that the change coalition had formed in the first stage of this project to the particulars of the different deliberative venues. For example, they introduced dialogue in the interactions of government with society at the regional level and learning at the farmer-to-farmer meetings and the statewide convening. I interpret this difference as an indication that learning is a concept that relates to a sense of professionalism and expertise that participants at the statewide level and at the farmers-to-farmers meetings have. In addition, this concept is more closely related to problem solving which among professionals might be more convincing. The meaning of dialogue is more closely related to community building, citizenship, and to the democratic quality of decision making. These issues might be of greater concern to citizens than to professionals in organizations that represent interests of farmers or environmental organizations.

In addition to these adaptations of the boundary concepts to the participants of deliberative venues, the mediators applied strategies of indirectness (Forester, 2000; 2009) to gain more support for the boundary concepts. At the local level in farmer-to-neighbor meetings the consultants asked participants to share their community and history, and at the statewide level the participants searched for core values about Wisconsin. As far as I can tell, at the farmer-to-farmer meetings these strategies were not applied. I interpret this to mean that the farmer-to-neighbor and Statewide Convening took place in a more
4. Dairy Gateway project: credible learning and stewardship

In general, at the farmer-to-neighbor meetings the struggles about the interpretations of stewardship resulted in an enactment of this concept. Farmers and neighbors further engaged in conversations about how to improve the environmental quality of their community.

Cautiously I conclude that the enactment of dialogue facilitated a setting in which participants could struggle about the meaning of stewardship. Participants did not contest or negotiate the meaning of dialogue and learning. These concepts merely enabled participants to engage in an interpretive struggle about the meaning of the boundary concept of stewardship. As a result of this struggle, stewardship and dialogue became credible concepts. However, participants also enacted two elements of government discourse. Those were the role of government in monitoring and auditing (especially at the farmer-to-farmer meetings participants agreed on this), and its role in creating standards (especially participants of the statewide convening demanded this).

The mediators’ introduction of boundary concepts contributed to a crossing of boundaries by participants between their subdiscourses and between government and deliberative governance discourse. In addition, the mediators “translated” (Pishchikova, 2006) the boundary concepts to the specifics of the different types of meetings. Finally, the mediators applied strategies of indirection (Forester, 2000; 2009) to gain support for the boundary concepts. As a result, participants could more easily negotiate the meaning of the boundary concepts and coproduce deliberative governance discourse.

adversarial context than the farmers’ meetings. To gain credibility for deliberative governance and to disrupt government discourse in these more adversarial contexts, the mediators took this into account in their deliberative designs.

The mediators’ introduction of dialogue and learning was very successful. Participants never contested learning and dialogue. There were a few moments at which conflict re-entered the conversations, but the mediator successfully asked participants to avoid animosities. The participants of all three types of meetings enacted the boundary concepts of dialogue and learning. I can also conclude that the mediators used these concepts to avoid and redirect conflicts about the interpretation of stewardship.

Stewardship, hands-on solutions and EMS

At the three types of meetings, mediators and other members of the change coalition also translated the boundary concept stewardship. For example, in deliberations between farmers and neighbors, the mediator asked the farmers to present hands on solutions to solve environmental issues. Another example is that at the Statewide Convening and in deliberations between farmers, the mediator invited experts to explain how farmers could be better stewards of the land when they developed an EMS. At the statewide convening the mediator asked all participants to enable farmers to be better stewards and collaboratively produce generic standards that could be applied in individual EMS’s.

The translation or contextualization of the concept stewardship was a way by which the change coalition attempted to alter the interpretation of farmers as polluters to farmers as conservers. They created a sphere of engagement with this concept and with the proposal to further develop an EMS and generic standards for these programs. At some meetings, participants struggled with these different interpretations. As we saw, at the farmer-to-neighbor meeting, the neighbors contested stewardship to mean the responsibility of farmers to improve the environment. Another example is the farmer-to-farmer meetings at which the explanation of an EMS enabled farmers to no longer consider government only as a prosecutor and environmentalists only as being in the business of ruining farmers. Farmers became more convinced that government could instead consider farmers to be stewards. Moreover, farmers interpreted an EMS as self-regulation but also agreed that government or environmental organizations still were needed to monitor or at least audit these regulations.

At the statewide level I lacked detailed documents to see how the generic standards were deliberated on, but it appears as if every participant could bring his own interpretation to the table and draw boundaries around these subdiscourses. These boundaries enriched the discussion as they were all acknowledged for their expertise. Rather than blocking the conversations, they were understood as a presentation of interests. At the farmer-to-neighbor meetings — except for one meeting at which participants acknowledged the stewardship of farmers immediately — participants struggled with the interpretation of stewardship of farmers and with their proposed solutions for environmental issues. At one of the meetings both a farmer and a citizen fell back into their unreflective adversarial conversations. The mediator turned this conflict into a deliberation.
**EPILOGUE OF THE DAIRY GATEWAY PROJECT AND GREEN TIER LAW**

“We were ready to partner with the WDNR, as opposed to a regulator-regulated relationship” (Holsum Dairies, 2006).

The 2007 annual progress report on the Green Tier lists fifteen participants in the Green Tier Program of which three had charters with business associations; one company was under tier 2; and eleven were in tier one (DNR-CEA, 2007, p. 10). Holsum Dairies was one of the Tier 1 companies. Even though Holsum Dairies had supported the Dairy Gateway project and participated at the last farmer-to-farmer meeting that I included in the analysis, none of the farmers from the Northeast of Wisconsin signed a contract with the DNR until May 2007. However, on the 29th of November 2007 DNR Secretary Matt Frank and association executive director Laurie Fischer of the Dairy Business Association signed a Green Tier charter between the DNR and the DBA (DNR NewsRelease, 2007). This charter applies to all members of the DBA and it will monitor the EMS’s of its members. Once every three years an independent auditor will audit the monitoring. All farmers that participated at the farmer-to-farmer meetings were members of the DBA. One CAFO-owner was and still is on the board of directors of the DBA. In addition, this charter includes elements of “superior environmental performance” that had been identified at that Statewide Convening. The picture below shows that at least three farmers involved in the Dairy Gateway project were present at the signing event. However, to my knowledge, none of the environmental organizations were part of the drafting of the charter, or of EMS’s for individual farms. “The charter in its final form includes several changes requested by those groups” (e-mail Shenot August 2010).

A 2009 evaluation of the Green Tier Law suggests that in some areas environmental performance improved. For example, it appears as if Green Tier companies reduced their hazardous waste more than non-Green Tier companies between 2005 and 2006 (see figure 4.4). Further, the report concludes that “averages for volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide were statistically different between Green Tier and the rest of the state. In both cases, the average for the Green Tier program was higher than the rest of the state. The averages for particulate matter, hazardous waste, and sulfur dioxide were not statistically different between the two groups” (WDNR, 2009, p. 89).

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**4. Dairy Gateway project: credible learning and stewardship**

Hence, the Dairy Gateway project resulted in the development and implementation of EMS’s at several farms. Their environmental performance and the positive impact on the environment cannot be confirmed yet.

**4.4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION OF BOUNDARY WORK IN THE DAIRY GATEWAY PROJECT**

In my conclusion I present the similarities and differences in types and content of boundary work across the two stages of the project, and across the sites of interaction and their various deliberative venues. This provides an answer to the questions of whether participants accepted, reflected upon or rejected boundary work and gives the results of these conversations. In other words, did participants think deliberative governance was credible and thus disrupt dominant government discourse? This section also provides some conclusions in relation to the reflective research design.

**CREDIBLE DELIBERATIVE GOVERNANCE DISCOURSE**

In the first stage, the drafting of the proposal for the Dairy Gateway project, a change coalition was formed. The member interacted and the pattern of boundary work I constructed from their interactions was introduction of boundary concepts of dialogue and learning; the demarcation of these concepts from conflict; the introduction of the boundary concept of stewardship; struggles about interpretation of stewardship; and agreement on the three boundary concepts. The change coalition defined the three boundary concepts: dialogue, learning and stewardship. Potential members of the change coalition interpreted these concepts in a variety of ways. This was especially true of their different interpretations of the concept of stewardship, which caused some struggles. One of the potential members of the coalition left when the majority of the coalition turned to the Farm Mediation Program. This potential member no longer considered the interpretation of stewardship credible as it now included stewardship of industrial farmers. At the end of this first stage, the environmentalists’ interpretation of stewardship became less powerful.

However, participants in the farmer-to-neighbor meetings, the Statewide Convening, and the farmer-to-farmer meetings believed that industrial farmers could be stewards of the land and community. At these meetings, mediators and other members of the change coalition...
such as academic experts translated and contextualized stewardship to the participants. Mediators also applied strategies of indirection to encourage participants to enter a dialogue about the interpretation of stewardship. Moreover, a possible suspicious actor, such as an industrial farmer or a governmental actor, introduced stewardship. At the same time these actors demonstrated how they were going to be stewards. At the farmer-to-neighbor meetings it was the farmers of industrial farms that had to prove their credibility as stewards. In interactions between government and farmers it was a governmental actor who had to prove the government was going to act differently. They had to prove that stewardship also meant that government would trust farmers to set their own environmental standards.

Hence, the introduction of the boundary concept of stewardship by suspicious actors, the translation of stewardship to specific deliberative venues, and the strategies of indirection were all successful. Participants accepted various interpretations of stewardship. For example, farmers gained credibility as stewards and stewardship was no longer the privilege of small- and medium-sized farms. Government gained credibility as a facilitator of environmental improvements through stewardship. Farmers also interpreted stewardship to mean that they would themselves create regulations above and beyond governmental regulations AND that government would ‘police’ these regulations. However, it remained vague whether environmental organizations or neighbors might be involved in the monitoring or policing. To some extent participants disrupted government discourse and started to believe in deliberative governance, but they also granted credibility to some elements of government discourse such as government’s monitoring and auditing.

SOME REMARKS CONCERNING THE RESEARCH DESIGN
The analysis of boundary work demonstrates that gaining credibility for deliberative governance discourse through boundary work is a contextual activity. In the Dairy Gateway project it was a successful way to get elements of deliberative governance discourse accepted: dialogue, learning and stewardship. Participants interpreted the boundary concept stewardship in various ways but were very straightforward in their acceptance of dialogue and learning as new ways that we term deliberative governance.

The adaptation of dialogue and learning made it possible for participants to further engage in a struggle about the interpretation and implementation of stewardship. Participants did accept the interpretation of stewardship to mean that farmers, and even industrial farms, can voluntarily improve their environmental performance. The easy adaptation of dialogue and learning can be explained in several ways. Perhaps the demarcation of dialogue and learning from conflict was the most convincing. It could also be said that the mediators did an excellent job and were convincing through their strategies of indirection. Perhaps the translations to the specific deliberative venues did the trick. Perhaps farmers were already considered to be stewards of the land. There is another explanation that has not yet been addressed. Perhaps a demarcation of learning and dialogue was successful because they were part of another dominant discourse, namely, the “learning discourse.” I can describe this as the idea that it is always a good thing to enlighten, to learn, to educate, or to improve. This conclusion resembles the idea from chapter three in which we saw that participants related their demarcations and transcending to a discourse on expertise. It is possible that boundary transcending is successful when it relates to some form of learning.

In the next chapter, and especially in the comparison of the Dairy Gateway project to the Protein Highway Project, I will pay extra attention to this.