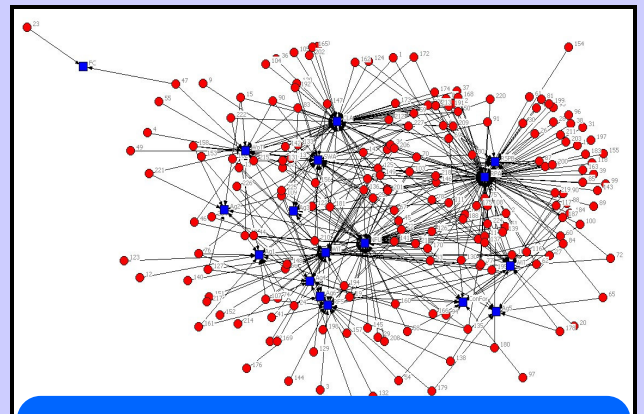


Land-Manager Networks and Segmentation

Given that the majority of woodlands in Britain are owned privately, the Forestry Commission engages with numerous private land-managers and owners seeking to promote sustainable management and woodland creation. Evidence shows that social networks play important roles in management decision-making and provide routes via which vital information is spread. Initial network analysis was undertaken alongside an outline segmentation focused on land-manager social connectivity.



" active forest owners could be channels to reach passive forest owners" Korhonen et al 2012, Scan. J. For. Res.

Background

In order to achieve their principle forestry policy objectives, afforestation and the sustainable management of existing forests, government agencies must engage with many private land-managers. However, in a landscape of fragmented and diverse land-management a high level of engagement can be a challenge for resource constrained public agencies. One obstacle is lack of knowledge about *who* land-managers are, along with *what* land and *where* they manage. Different forms of communication suit different land-managers, their objectives vary, and managers are often already engaged with established networks within which knowledge exchange is effective and satisfies their needs. Evidence shows that interpersonal interactions (with peers, professionals & family) are important influences on decisions, and advice from 'expert' peers or professionals can be influential. This raises questions about how government might best utilise these existing social networks to engage private land-managers and this project aimed to further understand of these. Land-managers' commitments to shared practices and values (which can span generations) often affect decisions, making some options more acceptable than others. An aspect of engagement then is understanding different manager's openness to forestry messages.

Objectives

- To provide an initial assessment of the professional social network of land-managers at a landscape scale.
- To construct an outline segmentation using land-managers' connectivity to other actors in their social network and likely receptivity to forestry messages as a basis.

Methods

Data to construct the professional social network was gathered through map-based exercises done within the Northern Devon Nature Improvement Area. Detailed maps of woodlands within this area were created using ArcGIS, and colour-coded according to existing levels of FC engagement. Local forestry agents and non-governmental organisation staff were then asked to provide ownership and management information about each woodland that had been classified as unengaged. The outline segmentation was constructed from existing literature and researchers' expertise based on prior work. It was then reviewed and tested by FC colleagues.

Findings

In the study area, approximately 80% of currently 'unengaged' woodland owners are linked to the local professional land-management network – through forestry agents and NGOs, land registration, or via membership of forestry or environmental organisations. Some actors occupy particularly important positions in these networks. For example, forestry agents possess significant information on local managers and management, and are seemingly critical actors in networks. Some woodland managers are more 'central' than others. Within this project we were not able to characterise these 'central' managers. However other research suggests that they have larger than average woodland holdings and pro-actively establish relationships with others. Furthermore, some non-governmental organisations appear to be more important within networks than others, consequently offering opportunities to reach many land-managers.

Land-managers can be 'segmented' according to their social connectivity. Segments are created by managers' **dominant activity** (which constructs their social 'world') and **interactional drivers** (everyday interactions via which knowledge exchange occurs). Land-manager profiles (from the wider literature) were grouped into four segments. '*On-board*' managers, such as estate managers and forestry businesses, are well connected and receptive to forestry messages. '*Tied*' managers include family-oriented farmers and community woodland groups. These are relatively strongly tied to non-forestry networks, are less receptive to forestry messages and thus not necessarily easy to change. Managers labelled as '*Ready for (some) change*' may be seeking or awaiting opportunities to change but are not connected to woodland actors or messages. This segment includes isolated farmers and commercial farm businesses. This is a key group for forestry change and may be best reached by land agents and other agricultural advisors. '*Hard to reach*' managers are not only likely to be unreceptive to messages of change but also have very limited connections via which to be reached. This group includes absentee owners. Although agents and contractors may be best placed to be in contact with this segment, in a resource constrained environment this may not be practical nor desirable.

Recommendations

- Facilitate and support local FC engagement with professional land-manager networks beyond forestry, especially the farming sector.
- Use information to which the FC already has access more effectively to underpin communications about forestry.
- Tailor messages to 'fit' with the objectives of key target groups, highlighting the specific benefits of forestry to, for example, agricultural production.

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Reports and Publications

Dandy, N., B. Ambrose-Oji, P. Handley & K. Watts (2013) Land-manager Networks Project WP2 Final Report: Network Analysis and Segmentation. Forest Research, Farnham.