Literature Review on Regional and Global Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Contributing to Transformational Change

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The peer reviewed and grey literature includes broad agreement that effective multi-stakeholder dialogue contributes to durability and thus to transformational change, as defined by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) to the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). However, the literature contains very little synthesized information on how to achieve multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformational change in practice, and it is especially lacking for regional and global initiatives.

This literature review attempts to examine the literature on how regional and global multi-stakeholder dialogues (MSD) contribute to transformational change in socio-ecological systems at a regional or global scale, and what factors affect the likelihood of the dialogue to achieve and sustain success. Particular attention has been applied to those involving the private sector.

Interrelationships of scale. This literature review primarily focuses on MSDs at the regional and global scale. However, there is a long-standing recognition among researchers and practitioners that one of the unique challenges to addressing environmental problems is their boundary-spanning and cross-scale complexities. Literature on telecoupled resource systems explicitly recognizes the interconnection of complex land systems and aspects of governance at multiple scales, which has implications for multi-stakeholder processes.

Private sector engagement. The literature varies in how it treats the role of private sector in global governance and multi-stakeholder dialogue often considering the unique role and power dynamics.

General Findings

Effectiveness of MSD. The majority of articles reviewed, including those published very recently, noted the difficulty of examining the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder collaboration, partnership, governance, or dialogue in achieving either immediate or more long-term goals. However, a few recent studies note the beneficial nature of many of the components of multi-stakeholder dialogue to both process outcomes (i.e., social learning, increased connectivity) and environmental outcomes.

Context matters. In one of the most recent reviews of literature on factors influencing the success and sustainability of collaborative governance, Orjan Bodin succinctly writes:

> *"Put bluntly, addressing the issue is clearly not as simple as just establishing collaboration among a large set of actors and stakeholders, and then all will be well. Rather, the questions are when and how collaboration is effective, for what kind of environmental problems is it useful,*

> *and if and how this relates to the temporal and spatial characteristics of the governed ecosystems."*[1]

While historically, there has been widespread agreement on the principles of successful multi-stakeholder dialogue and the principles that build a dialogue that is sustainable and impactful, many of those conditions are normative or context-specific.

Key Factors

Below are some of the key factors, synthesized from the literature, which contribute to effective, transformative outcomes associated with MSDs.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

In the design phase, it is important to consider the socio-ecological context, the scale, tempo, and sequencing, and the purpose of the MSD. Below are some findings that relate to defining the problem. Some specific considerations, along with a summary of the literature on each are summarized here:

- **Validating the need for a new MSD process or structure:** MSDs generally improve outcomes but are not a panacea and care must be taken to avoid duplication of efforts. However, there was a lack of evidence found in the literature on *how* to target MSDs in particular scenarios.

- **Understanding aspects of a collaborative problem:** Understanding the task at the outset helps develop a fit for purpose structure for an MSD. Specific considerations include:

  o Degree of cooperation required: Coordination is a simpler collaboration mechanism that has lower transaction costs given agreed upon goals. Cooperation requires building agreement on a shared strategy, which is more time consuming and riskier.

  o Social structures and political economy: Understanding the nature of the problem and the associated power and influence dynamics are key elements that inform who should be involved and how strategies to address the problem (i.e., a Theory of Change) should be designed. Policy studies propose a variety of frameworks to understand the complexity of underlying contextual factors and stakeholder motivations, which are rarely simple or reducible in practice.

  o Ecosystems and boundary-spanning problems: Boundary-spanning management approaches are needed to address ecosystem-based problems which transcend national and state/province authority.

  o Scale and temporal fit: Theoretic literature often suggests systems of nested governance are more resilient to changes within a scale of the ecosystems. Misalignment of social and ecological systems can be challenging and may influence outcomes for both the social and the ecological system. Timing and sequencing are also important, and milestones should be tied to both social and ecological context.

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[1] Örjan Bodin, "Collaborative Environmental Governance: Achieving Collective Action in Social-Ecological Systems," *Science* 357, no. 6352 (August 18, 2017): eaan1114, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aan1114.

BRINGING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TOGETHER

Who participates and how they interact with other participants is another key set of factors contributing to the potential for transformation in MSDs. Some factors include:

- **Equity and trust:** Trust among stakeholders underpins the factors contributing to sustainable outcomes by reducing conflicts, lower dropout rates, and mitigate power imbalances.

- **Social learning:** As an emerging concept, social learning is necessary but not sufficient for collaborative management. Deliberative, sustained, and trusted interactions lead to social learning.

- **Bridging organizations**: Institutions that use a variety of collaborative mechanisms to link actors across a network increase mutual trust and help build adequate support to address environmental problems.

- **Leadership:** Leadership is commonly recognized as critical to partnerships, yet little empirical information was identified that can be easily applied to how leadership can be most effectively fostered to support successful region-based transformative change.

- **Participation and inclusivity:** Intentionality of participating stakeholders is preferred to an open or overburdened process. Stakeholders, both in their seniority and their network position, must have the capacity to create change.

STRUCTURING THE DIALOGUE

- **Consider interactions:** A Theory of Change that considers who has the capacity to enact change through a thorough analysis of social and political contexts may be a tool that allows for an effective process for evaluating the depth of network needed, given trade-offs in efficiency and resources required.

- **Frequency and density of interactions:** Cooperation problems require more dense networks with frequent interactions, whereas looser networks with more centralized interaction may accomplish goals and be more efficient in addressing coordination problems. Principled and varied engagement helps actors who are less central to engage productively in the activities of a multi-stakeholder initiative.

- **Develop common goals:** Several scholars argue that specificity in goals provides incentive for stakeholders to invest resources in working towards the goals of the partnership. However, this relationship between the level of ambition and stringency of goals and outcomes may depend on the level of conflicting interests in the problem at hand and whether a specific goal might impede collaboration.

- **Knowledge co-production and integrating experts:** The provision of comprehensible information with the ability to access information in further detail if needed is a process determinant of effective social learning, which in turn influences the ability of MSD to influence systemic change.

- **Adaptation:** Power sharing, institution building, and involving multiple stakeholders are elements of an iterative process. Because of the dynamic nature of social and ecological systems, providing information to participants throughout the process is important and can lead to greater adaptability. Adaptive pathways can help plan sequences of actions in response to changing conditions.

- **Skilled facilitation:** A skilled, neutral facilitator can set policies and procedures that are important to building equity and trust.
- **Exit ramps and continued support:** There was little systemic or empirical study found on partnership sustainability planning or exit planning, despite an intuitive sense that it is important and has implications for engagement and outcomes.

Measuring Impacts

Assessing and isolating the impact of MSDs on complex, multi-dimensional systems-change problems through isolating their linkage to environmental or social outcomes is challenging. Measuring impacts improves learning and transparency in monitoring and evaluation has been linked to process legitimacy. As a result, much of the literature and the monitoring and evaluation efforts often focus on process variables, instead of environmental or broader outcomes.

Process variables can be measured via:

- Survey methodologies can quantify belief change among stakeholders and provide insights into social learning.
- Network analysis can define network structure and density over time and can be considered a proxy for monitoring the effectiveness and durability of multi-stakeholder processes.
- Other developing methods.

Linking **process to environmental outcomes** is a nascent field of research with limited proven study methods.

Case Studies

The literature review includes case studies that can illustrate the factors outlined above in the context of a specific multi-stakeholder dialogue.

The **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil** is a model of multi-stakeholder collaboration on supply chain sustainability that was established in 2002 and has grown to include 4,000 members including oil palm producers, processors, traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks, investors, and environmental and social NGOs. RSPO has developed the standards for sustainable palm oil and a global certification system. The RSPO offers lessons on stakeholder representation, organizational structure, and consensus approach.

The **Global Alliance for the Improvement of Nutrition (GAIN)** is a partnership that works to increase access to and affordability of nutritious food for the poor. GAIN has had impressive results, some of which are most likely attributable to its multi-stakeholder convening and partnership model. That said, there have been costs for this approach – transaction costs and project delays among others.

The **African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF)** exemplifies the value of boundary spanners and backbone organizations to manage risk in collaborative undertakings.

Introduction

The peer reviewed and grey literature includes broad agreement that effective multi-stakeholder dialogue contributes to durability of outcomes and thus to transformational change, as defined by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) to the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). The STAP has concluded that to "create ownership, address innovation, pathways to scaling and transformation, enable learning and to maximise global environmental benefits," GEF projects should "develop multi-stakeholder platforms including with local communities, not just government officials, from inception and design, through to project completion, ideally building on existing platforms, and flexibly structured to extend and evolve in form and membership over time towards enduring transformational change."[2] The STAP paper on durability also argues for the necessity a "robust theory of change … by assessing assumptions and outlining causal pathways," which is a critical component of multi-stakeholder dialogue process that contributes to transformational change.

However, as much of the literature readily notes, there exists little synthesized information on how to achieve multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformational change in practice. While some literature does work to empirically verify the steps needed to achieve lasting and/or scalable change in community-centered engagement and dialogue,[3] it falls short in examining broader regional initiatives that work across several programming areas, such as the GEF's Integrated Approach Pilots (IAP). Furthermore, others note that dialogue often fails to incorporate scholarly knowledge on best practices.[4]

Thus, this literature review attempts to examine the literature on how regional and global multi-stakeholder dialogues (MSD) contribute to transformational change in socio-ecological systems, and what factors affect the likelihood of the dialogue to achieve and sustain success. While considering meta-analyses and broad lessons learned from the literature at the project scale (which is plentiful), this review focuses on literature on regional multi-stakeholder dialogues and partnerships that attempt to incorporate the private sector, with a lens towards providing actionable key success factors and indicators that could inform the GEF's work.

This document primarily undertakes a narrative review of the literature, using keyword and citation searches to assemble a synthesis of the diverse fields with relevance to multi-stakeholder dialogue on the regional and global levels. This review of the literature should be read as neither exhaustive nor representative, given the bias of peer reviewed literature towards North American and European cases and the significant gaps in the literature elaborated here. Where possible, the review attempts to clearly delineate between direct empirical support, inference from direct empirical support, and factors identified but not substantiated in the peer reviewed literature.

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[2] "Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment" (Global Environment Facility, June 2019), http://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/DURABILITY_web%20posting_0.pdf.

[3] See for example Eleanor J. Sterling et al., "Assessing the Evidence for Stakeholder Engagement in Biodiversity Conservation," *Biological Conservation* 209 (May 2017): 159–71, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2017.02.008.

[4] Raymond Clémençon, "Welcome to the Anthropocene: Rio+20 and the Meaning of Sustainable Development," *The Journal of Environment & Development* 21, no. 3 (August 16, 2012): 311–38.

History and Context of Participatory Development and the Literature

Explicit discussion of MSD or multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) in the peer-reviewed literature has, for the past two decades, been in many ways framed and driven by the broader policy environment. A wide variety of literature on governance, collaboration, participation, and dialogue includes literature explicitly focusing on MSPs for sustainable development and literature that considers conditions for partnership and multi-stakeholder governance more broadly. Much of this literature has foundations in more basic social science or policy research, which is not reviewed here.

Participation in decision-making processes and the idea of stakeholder engagement grew from early theoretical contexts in the late 1960s as a response to top-down development programs alongside increasing privatization in development. Early peer-reviewed literature on participation largely represents a critical response to the shortcomings of participatory development in achieving its stated outcomes of a semblance of equity at the local level.[5]

The conceptual framework of transnational partnerships for sustainable development entered the lexicon of policy and later the peer reviewed literature first through the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and later more explicitly after the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, which formalized "Type-II" partnerships for sustainable development involving the private sector as a part of the path to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Here, we use Schaferhoff's definition of transboundary MSPs as ''…institutionalized transboundary interactions between public and private actors, which aim at the provision of collective goods.''[6]

Much of the directly relevant literature published in the 2000s adopts multi-stakeholder partnerships as a framework, often examining the factors relevant to their effectiveness from a theoretical perspective. In 2007, a systematic review of the partnership literature found that it encompassed two broad perspectives: an examination of the ways in which actors worked for strategic gain through MSPs, and an examination of partnerships from an institutional perspective and the contexts in which they arise.[7] In tandem, scholars examined the transition of the governance to address global environmental challenges, distinguishing between government, and governance, defined as rule systems that work towards shared goals outside of normal national jurisdictions.[8]

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[5] See for example Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (Zed Books, 2001).

[6] Marco Schäferhoff, Sabine Campe, and Christopher Kaan, "Transnational Public-Private Partnerships in International Relations: Making Sense of Concepts, Research Frameworks, and Results," *International Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 453, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2009.00869.x.

[7] Mariëtte M. Van Huijstee, Mara Francken, and Pieter Leroy, "Partnerships for Sustainable Development: A Review of Current Literature," *Environmental Sciences* 4, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 75–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/15693430701526336.

[8] This definition borrows from Rossenau and is consistent with usage in several reviews, including Harriet Bulkeley et al., "Governing Climate Change Transnationally: Assessing the Evidence from a Database of Sixty Initiatives," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 30, no. 4 (August 2012): 591–612, https://doi.org/10.1068/c11126.

Subsequent literature began to critique a shift towards MSPs in addressing problems of sustainable development in the 2000s, and systematic reviews began to assess the evidence of outcomes driven by earlier MSPs, finding generally mixed results. This work also disclaimed the analytic framework of partnership as a way to understand relations between stakeholders.[9] At this time, some literature began to examine the motives for private entities to collaborate with governments and other stakeholders, including via public-private partnerships (PPP). Such literature largely took the perspective of the interests of firms or other individual actors rather than considering economic or social outcomes.

The concept of "collective impact", first coined in 2011 in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, provided a framework of five principles for more effective collaboration. While prominent in practitioner and philanthropy circles, the concept did not make a significant appearance in the peer reviewed literature.[10]

While taking into account earlier literature on Type-II MSPs, this review draws extensively from recent literature on governance and network analyses to attempt to further understandings of key factors influencing the likelihood that dialogue and resultant partnerships drives transformational change. Here, we follow Pattberg and Widerberg in understanding the relationship between these three fields of literature by considering partnerships a "form of networked governance."[11] This literature generally finds positive influence of dialogue and networked governance on process factors, such as learning and increased collaboration, which an emerging literature links to improved environmental outcomes in some cases.

Existing Literature Reviews and General Findings

In one of the most recent reviews of literature on factors influencing the success and sustainability of collaborative governance, Orjan Bodin succinctly writes:

> *"Put bluntly, addressing the issue is clearly not as simple as just establishing collaboration among a large set of actors and stakeholders, and then all will be well. Rather, the questions are when and how collaboration is effective, for what kind of environmental problems is it useful, and if and how this relates to the temporal and spatial characteristics of the governed ecosystems."*[12]

While historically, there has been widespread agreement on the principles of successful multi-stakeholder dialogue and the principles that build a dialogue that is sustainable and impactful, many of those conditions are normative or context-specific. Literature is inherently interdisciplinary and draws

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[9] Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff described the term partnership as ''conceptually empty and merely politically expedient'' (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011, p. 31).

[10] See the multiplicity of articles on collective impact in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

[11] Philipp Pattberg and Oscar Widerberg, "Transnational Multistakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Conditions for Success," *Ambio* 45, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 46, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-015-0684-2.

[12] Bodin, "Collaborative Environmental Governance."

on several different fields, leading to fragmentation and vastly different results for different entry points and keywords for the literature.

This brief review of the literature found many reviews and systematic analyses on the topic of multi-stakeholder partnerships or initiatives more generally. This section reviews five meta-analyses encompassing the review of hundreds of peer-reviewed resources especially relevant to the concept of transformational multi-stakeholder dialogue in socio-ecological systems at a regional or global scale involving the private sector. Methodologically, we distinguish here between systematic and general reviews of the literature and aggregations of case studies or analyses to determine overall empirical trends. Factors identified from these studies and additional literature reviewed have been synthesized and augmented in the following section.

Cashore et al.,[13] in a 2019 hybrid review of the literature and proposal of theories on key elements influencing the efficacy of transnational "stakeholder learning dialogues," emphasized the importance of understanding causal pathways, linking a robust body of literature on durable domestic policy outcomes to international relations, and several factors that lead to dialogue design for durable policy outcomes.[14] While focused explicitly on dialogues meant to affect policy change, the piece offers key insights on problem definition, concerns about the breadth and pace of stakeholder inclusion, and understanding of the political and economic context. The paper presents largely conceptual, rather than empirical, arguments in support of the chosen factors.

Bodin, in a 2017 review in *Science,* considers the implications of literature on socio-ecological systems on the effectiveness of collaborative governance, engaging more explicitly with questions of scale and fit that the aforementioned work.[15] The review focuses on the implications of the structure of networks on process and goal outcomes, many of which are correlated with the GEF's understanding of systems change. Building from literature that finds that increased networking and contact does not, in some situations, inherently improve outcomes, Bodin cites literature that identifies flexible aspects of network structure, that in regional settings, such as integrated coastal zone management, drove systems change and by association positive outcomes.

Many early literature reviews identify similar principles to Bodin and Cashore, supported by extensive case studies conducted at the project scale.[16] For example, a review on stakeholder participation finds that key factors influencing the ability of stakeholder participation in environmental management to create durable change include a process underpinned by equity, trust, and learning; systematic analysis

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[13] Benjamin Cashore et al., "Designing Stakeholder Learning Dialogues for Effective Global Governance," *Policy and Society* 38, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 118–47, https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2019.1579505.

[14] The six steps Cashore identifies are: (a) Problem definition assessments; (b) Problem framing; (c) Developing coalition membership; (d) Causal framework development; (e) Scoping exercises; (f) Knowledge institutionalization. Within each of these, he identifies pitfalls and best practices.

[15] Bodin, "Collaborative Environmental Governance."

[16] Peter Hazlewood, "Global Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships:" (Independent Research Forum/WRI, 2015); Mark S. Reed, "Stakeholder Participation for Environmental Management: A Literature Review," *Biological Conservation* 141, no. 10 (October 1, 2008): 2417–31, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2008.07.014; Huijstee, Francken, and Leroy, "Partnerships for Sustainable Development"; Keith Bezanson and Paul Isenman, "Governance of New Global Partnerships: Challenges, Weaknesses, and Lessons," CGD Policy Papers (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2012), https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/1426627_file_Bezanson_Isenman_FINAL.pdf.

and representation of stakeholders; clear objectives of the process (but not necessarily outcomes at the outset); methods that are tailored to the decision-making context; consideration of the appropriate level of engagement; and integration of local and scientific knowledge.[17] Reviews of global multi-stakeholder governance in large vertically integrated global health are an exception to a predominant focus on the project scale.

Pattberg and Widerberg attempt to fill the gap in a systematic review of the evidence on transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships from the era following the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.[18] They define such partnerships as involving public and private actors across different national contexts, explicitly meeting the criteria of this review. The authors identify nine conditions through a review of the literature and interviews with leading civil society organizations in 2014, reflected in more detail in the section on factors below.

Taking the approach of aggregating information about different partnerships, a collaborative team of twelve researchers identified and coded sixty examples of transnational climate governance initiatives over a two-year period, ending in 2012.[19] Notably, many of the authors of this analysis have published foundational works on perspectives in global and transnational governance, and their analysis of what constitutes transnational governance emphasizes the role of power and legitimacy. Noting that understanding the emergence and functioning of such initiatives is pre-requisite to assessing their effectiveness, and that they "… know little about the effectiveness of governance functions,"[20] the authors argue that the establishment of transnational climate governance initiatives generally reflects emergent national regimes and existing patterns of political economy, as opposed to partnerships arising to address needs or faults in existing governance.

In a more recent review, Porter and Birdi examine reasons for effective collaborations in the water sector, drawing from case studies across local, national, and regional scales.[21] The article notes that the high cost of infrastructure for water management makes large-scale investment and innovation difficult, driving increasing collaborations with the private sector and institutions at different scales. After grouping 238 conclusions from 26 papers, the authors emphasized the importance of metrics that incentivize stakeholders to work together, providing dedicated funding for new ideas or meeting costs, and spreading the costs of involvement over all stakeholders. Notably, previous literature on watershed partnerships identified funding and inclusive group membership as key priorities.[22] Recent literature, as elaborated in later sections, has largely moved beyond on a focus on inclusivity towards intentionality while maintaining a balance in power.

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[17] Reed, "Stakeholder Participation for Environmental Management."

[18] Pattberg and Widerberg, "Transnational Multistakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development."

[19] Bulkeley et al., "Governing Climate Change Transnationally."

[20] Bulkeley et al., 596.

[21] James J. Porter and Kamal Birdi, "22 Reasons Why Collaborations Fail: Lessons from Water Innovation Research," *Environmental Science & Policy* 89 (November 1, 2018): 100–108, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.07.004.

[22] Leach William D. and Pelkey Neil W., "Making Watershed Partnerships Work: A Review of the Empirical Literature," *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management* 127, no. 6 (December 1, 2001): 378–85, https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)0733-9496(2001)127:6(378).

DEFINING THE REGION AS A SCALE

Because of the lesser-explored literature and relevance to the GEF's programming, this review attempts to explicitly adopt a regional or global scale in considering factors affecting the likelihood of multi-stakeholder dialogue.

However, there exists a long-running recognition among both researchers and practitioners that one of the unique concerns that building institutions to address environmental problems represents is their boundary-spanning and complex nature.[23] Scholars have assessed empirical evidence on scale and cross-scale dynamics of both information and governance systems, pointing to the importance of understanding and interaction not only between national and subnational scales but directly and indirectly between local and global scales.[24] Recently, the impact of the interrelationship of scales has been formalized using the language of telecoupled resource systems, which explicitly recognizes the interconnection of complex land systems and aspects of governance at multiple scales.[25] As noted in a review of factors, these cross-scale, boundary spanning, and fit considerations have considerable implications for the design of multi-stakeholder processes.

Particularly in cases where interventions and planning are defined in terms of local risks and vulnerabilities, such as in the case of climate adaptation, it may be difficult to separate casual mechanisms from underlying conditions that lead to vulnerability or risk.[26] In other words, a critical intervention in poverty alleviation at the local level may be the most effective intervention to adapt to the effects of climate change, but such an intervention would not be compatible with a view of risk based on climate impacts. Indeed, in their review of transnational climate governance, Bulkeley et al. note that their inclusion criteria biased the sample of initiatives towards climate mitigation as opposed to adaptation.[27]

Given the interdependency, and in at least one case, empirically demonstrated similarities[28] of governance at different scales, literature from subnational regions, as well as theoretical or empirical literature examining cases from across different scales, is drawn from in this review to consider lessons for regional and global scales.

PERSPECTIVES ON PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN DIALOGUE ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

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[23] See as a prominent historical example C. S. Holling and Gary K. Meffe, "Command and Control and the Pathology of Natural Resource Management," *Conservation Biology* 10, no. 2 (1996): 328–37, https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1523-1739.1996.10020328.x.

[24] David W. Cash et al., "Scale and Cross-Scale Dynamics: Governance and Information in a Multilevel World," *Ecology and Society* 11, no. 2 (2006): art8, https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-01759-110208.

[25] Hallie Eakin, Ximena Rueda, and Ashwina Mahanti, "Transforming Governance in Telecoupled Food Systems," *Ecology and Society* 22, no. 4 (November 24, 2017), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09831-220432.

[26] See Jessica Ayers, "Resolving the Adaptation Paradox: Exploring the Potential for Deliberative Adaptation Policy-Making in Bangladesh," n.d., 27.

[27] Bulkeley et al., "Governing Climate Change Transnationally," 599.

[28] Carina Wyborn and R. Patrick Bixler, "Collaboration and Nested Environmental Governance: Scale Dependency, Scale Framing, and Cross-Scale Interactions in Collaborative Conservation," *Journal of Environmental Management* 123 (July 15, 2013): 58–67, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2013.03.014.

This literature review explicitly considers cases of engaging the private sector through MSD to lead to transformative change. However, the literature differs sharply in how it treats the role of the private sector in global governance generally, but particularly in stakeholder dialogue.

One body of literature concerned with network analyses considers the private sector similarly to any other stakeholder, considering them different by virtue of the unique attributes they may hold within networks rather than categorically different (many network analyses take a similar perspective towards governments, considering them like as they would any other stakeholder, albeit far more central and with many formalized relations).[29]

A separate body of governance literature, reviewed above, considers the unique role that business may have played, in many cases, in causing or aggravating the problems that the MSD was set up to cause, and, as noted in the factors and design considerations in the following section, consider their early engagement to expose the process to the potential diluting of the problem definition or measures taken to address the problem.[30] In many cases, empirical literature notes ways in which a critical problem may be equated with a business interest (i.e. climate change with profitability).

A body of literature primarily oriented around organizational studies and business ethics, by contrast, approaches the question of partnership with the private sector from the perspective of firms, dovetailing with the literature on public-private partnerships mentioned above.[31] The review found this literature of limited utility in assessing the potential of MSD involving the private sector to affect transformative change in socio-ecological systems.

Another large swath of literature analyzes the role of business and capital accumulation more generally in creating environmental and social harms. While critical to understanding systems that have led to present global challenges facing socio-ecological systems, such literature is both well reviewed elsewhere and difficult to translate into issue-specific insights for the practitioner.

This review will adopt a combination of the perspective of network analysts in considering the private sector neutrally to allow for a broader swath of insight and noting places in which engaging the interests of the private sector or other stakeholders might cause specific considerations in structuring a dialogue.

FINDINGS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MSD

The majority of articles reviewed, including those published very recently, noted the difficulty of examining the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder collaboration, partnership, governance, or dialogue in achieving either immediate or more long-term goals.

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[29] Mark Lubell et al., "Social Network Analysis for SCALE® Monitoring and Evaluation," n.d., 78.

[30] Cashore et al., "Designing Stakeholder Learning Dialogues for Effective Global Governance," January 2, 2019.

[31] See as examples Frank den Hond, Frank G. A. de Bakker, and Jonathan Doh, "What Prompts Companies to Collaboration With NGOs? Recent Evidence From the Netherlands," *Business & Society* 54, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 187–228, https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650312439549; Sébastien Mena and Guido Palazzo, "Input and Output Legitimacy of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (July 2012): 527–56, https://doi.org/10.5840/beq201222333; Rob van Tulder et al., "Enhancing the Impact of Cross-Sector Partnerships," *Journal of Business Ethics* 135, no. 1 (April 1, 2016): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2756-4.

Indeed, assessing MSD using a framework purely oriented towards assessing the ability of the partnership as a whole to achieve its mission leads to few clear conclusions. As Pattberg and Widerberg write: "While bottom-up transnational multi-stakeholder arrangements are widely perceived as a potential contribution to addressing global change, recent studies find little evidence for positive performance."[32] While noting the effectiveness of certain partnerships, such as the Forest Stewardship Council, they further conclude that 38 percent of original Johannesburg partnerships show little to no measurable outputs and that 42 percent of partnerships with measurable output do not engage directly on their stated goals, and further fail to engage thus far marginalized groups. Here, while there is a significant risk of conflation between underlying context and the impact of the multi-stakeholder process itself, it is clear that partnership is not a panacea. This is fairly typical of assessments of Type-II partnerships.

However, more recent studies referenced in the following section note the beneficial nature of many of the components of multi-stakeholder dialogue to both aspects of process (i.e. social learning, increased connectivity) and environmental outcomes. Thus, while there exists ample evidence that done well, certain elements of multi-stakeholder dialogue do improve outcomes and lead to systems change, understanding how to do it well beyond a set of principles is of key importance, since simply initiating a partnership may not achieve the intended results. The contribution of peer-reviewed literature to continuing to build a causal framework from which to better evaluate the impact of multi-stakeholder processes and collaborative governance, as well as factors affecting it, is thus of critical importance.

Key Factors Influencing the Likelihood of MSDs to Affect or Contribute to Transformational Change

This section introduces factors that contribute to the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder dialogue in a specific context or in a theoretical sense Based on a review of the literature. In aggregate, the literature generally understands multi-stakeholder processes, deliberative processes, or other stakeholder interactions within the context of a broader initiative or goal, where the success of dialogue as a process contributes to other environmental outcomes.

Many articles bemoan the lack of generalizability of conclusions about MSP, while noting that this generalizability can be dangerous because of different policy, political, and issue contexts.[33] The section makes every effort to note where general factors could not be well substantiated in empirical evidence or where the underlying literature appeared heavily context specific.

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[32] Pattberg and Widerberg, "Transnational Multistakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development," 42.

[33] See Porter and Birdi, "22 Reasons Why Collaborations Fail." for several examples of this literature.

Defining the Problem and the Purpose of the MSD

While many success factors of MSD are context dependent, the literature provides a range of empirically supported factors on ways in which the structure of the problem an MSD is meant to solve relate to the optimal structure of the MSD process.

VALIDATING THE NEED FOR NEW MSD PROCESSES OR STRUCTURES: IS THE MSD THE RIGHT TOOL?

- **MSDs generally improve outcomes but are not a panacea and care must be taken to avoid duplication of efforts.**
- **There was a lack of evidence found in the literature on *how* to target MSDs in particular scenarios.**

A key factor reinforced throughout particularly more recent literature is that while MSD has been generally shown to improve outcomes during and beyond the project period in a variety of scenarios, even an effective MSD process is not a panacea. In cases where a new dialogue or governance structure is related to an international regime, such as the UNFCCC or UNCCD, ensuring coherence with both international norms to the extent possible and existing frameworks helps mitigate concerns of duplication.[34]

Despite consistent cautions against the universal applicability of MSD as a tool, this review found little literature on empirically supported criteria supporting the applicability of MSD in a particular scenario.

PRECURSORS: UNDERSTANDING ASPECTS OF A COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM

COORDINATION VS. COOPERATION

- **Coordination is a simpler collaboration mechanism that has lower transaction costs given agreed upon goals. Cooperation requires building agreement on a shared strategy, which is more time consuming and riskier.**
- **Understanding the task at the outset helps develop a fit for purpose structure for an MSD.**

A key distinguishing factor in informing the structure of a MSD is between coordination problems, in which many stakeholders work towards a common goal with an agreed approach but decrease transaction costs, and cooperation problems, in which stakeholders must confront diverging interests and trade-offs.[35] Others have characterized these as "malign problems" as opposed to "benign

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[34] Boudewijn Derkx and Pieter Glasbergen, "Elaborating Global Private Meta-Governance: An Inventory in the Realm of Voluntary Sustainability Standards," *Global Environmental Change* 27 (July 2014): 41–50, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2014.04.016.

[35] Ryan R. J. McAllister, Bruce M. Taylor, and Ben P. Harman, "Partnership Networks for Urban Development: How Structure Is Shaped by Risk," *Policy Studies Journal* 43, no. 3 (2015): 379–98, https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12103; Michele Barnes et al., "Theorizing the Social Structural Foundations of Adaptation and Transformation in Social-Ecological Systems," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2932575.

problems."[36] If the problem is clearly a cooperation problem, a MSD process may be needed to determine the best path forward in deliberated to develop a shared strategy, with optimal intensity of contact possibly correlated with risk,[37] whereas in cases of coordination, a looser network, possibly drawn from existing dialogue or partnership structures, may provide a more efficient means to speed implementation.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

- **Understanding the nature of the problem and the associated power and influence dynamics are key elements that inform who should be involved and how strategies to address the problem (i.e., a Theory of Change) should be designed.**

- **Policy studies propose a variety of frameworks to understand the complexity of underlying contextual factors and stakeholder motivations, which are rarely simple or reducible in practice.**

Another key factor for setting up an MSD for transformational change is to clearly articulate the structure of the problem and its underlying power relations to right-size the seniority and amount of engagement from the MSD.[38] This is an iterative process, described further below in the section on social learning, whereby through a MSD, a fuller understanding of the problem and its potential solutions are explored and better understood. The gray literature on Theory of Change, which originates from the field of evaluation and work by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change among others, provides a common framework to conduct this analysis. ActKnowledge, an Aspen partner, describes Theory of Change as a "rigorous yet participatory process whereby groups and stakeholders identify the conditions they believe have to unfold for their long-term goals to be met. These conditions are modeled as outcomes or, more precisely, desired outcomes."[39] The process involves defining the necessary and sufficient conditions needed to bring about change within a complex system.[40]

ECOLOGY AND BOUNDARY-SPANNING PROBLEMS

- **Boundary-spanning management approaches are needed to address ecosystem-based problems which transcend national and state/province authority.**

- **In some cases, differences in scale between social and ecological systems may entail understanding the trade-offs between potential solutions that address social or ecological**

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[36] Edward L. Miles et al., *Environmental Regime Effectiveness: Confronting Theory with Evidence* (MIT Press, 2001).

[37] Ramiro Berardo, "The Evolution of Self-Organizing Communication Networks in High-Risk Social-Ecological Systems," *International Journal of the Commons* 8, no. 1 (2014): 236–58.

[38] See for an elaboration of the importance of power dynamics in different aspects of process Anna Ernst, "Review of Factors Influencing Social Learning within Participatory Environmental Governance," *Ecology and Society* 24, no. 1 (January 21, 2019), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10599-240103; G. Cundill and R. Rodela, "A Review of Assertions about the Processes and Outcomes of Social Learning in Natural Resource Management," *Journal of Environmental Management* 113 (December 30, 2012): 7–14, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2012.08.021.

[39] ActKnowledge, https://www.actknowledge.org/services/theory-of-change/

[40] Center for the Theory of Change, https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/how-does-theory-of-change-work/

aspects of the problem.

Much of the literature on local natural resource governance considers the concept of the region as an ecosystem as inherently boundary-spanning and that can lead to problems under any form of national or jurisdictional governance that isn't aligned with the ecosystem. In parallel to the attention paid to participatory planning as a whole, there has been extensive scholarly examination of regional, boundary-spanning work on collaborative environmental governance.

While the issue of meta-governance, identified as a key concern in Pattberg's 2016 review of transnational governance initiatives, may pose less of a concern in boundary-spanning collaboration between local entities, the academic literature notes concern over general fragmentation of governance across global environmental concerns, and there have been far-reaching proposals for international organizations to help play a role in ensuring coherence.[41,42]

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND TEMPORAL FIT

The fit between socio-ecological systems and institutions designed to govern them has been a long-standing question in conservation and natural resource management, explored in the STAP's integration paper and in the literature.[43] Scholars propose systems of nested governance that are resilient to changes within the scale of the ecosystem. With regard to multi-stakeholder processes, a recent argument emphasizes the consideration of fit both within social and within ecological systems, as well as the ways in which those systems map onto each other (see Osterblom and Bodin 2012 for an explicit consideration of the relation of these systems).[44]

However, many also argue that social and ecological concerns may not align and may in fact be, in many cases, countervailing concerns, requiring a recognition that not all solutions that are positive for ecological systems are positive for social systems and vice versa.[45] Anticipating situations where social and ecological goals might not move in concert may be a key aspect of managing a related MSD.

Temporal fit has been a long-lasting topic of concern in business and organizational studies more broadly[46] and has recently entered conversation on socio-ecological systems.[47] In time-bound ecological processes, literature on fit between social and ecological systems considers different aspects of timing:

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[41] Frank Biermann et al., "The Fragmentation of Global Governance Architectures: A Framework for Analysis," *Global Environmental Politics* 9, no. 4 (November 2009): 14–40, https://doi.org/10.1162/glep.2009.9.4.14.

[42] Derkx and Glasbergen, "Elaborating Global Private Meta-Governance."

[43] Carl Folke et al., "The Problem of Fit between Ecosystems and Institutions: Ten Years Later," *Ecology and Society* 12, no. 1 (2007): art30, https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-02064-120130.

[44] Henrik Österblom and Örjan Bodin, "Global Cooperation among Diverse Organizations to Reduce Illegal Fishing in the Southern Ocean: Reducing Illegal Fishing in the Southern Ocean," *Conservation Biology* 26, no. 4 (August 2012): 638–48, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2012.01850.x.

[45] See Ingrid J Visseren-Hamakers, "A Framework for Analyzing and Practicing Integrative Governance: The Case of Global Animal and Conservation Governance," *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 36, no. 8 (December 1, 2018): 1391–1414, https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654418788565.

[46] Deborah G. Ancona, Gerardo A. Okhuysen, and Leslie A. Perlow, "Taking Time to Integrate Temporal Research," *Academy of Management Review* 26, no. 4 (October 1, 2001): 512–29, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.5393887.

[47] Folke et al., "The Problem of Fit between Ecosystems and Institutions."

total duration, tempo, and sequence, asking how milestones are driven by the social and ecological context.[48]

In some cases, spending time ensuring comprehensive stakeholder engagement may decrease the ability of the MSD to accomplish its mission effectively, particularly if the mission is time-bound. However, incomplete stakeholder engagement, as elaborated in sections above, might similarly inhibit effectiveness. STAP's paper on enduring outcomes addresses this initially through recommending the possibility of changes in project planning timeframes (see "Adaptive Management" section).

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON PLANNING FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

The literature identified several general considerations in planning multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformative change, articulated below.

Many considerations, such as the need to create trust or mitigate power dynamics in interpersonal situations, may address factors introduced outside the dialogue process, which may preclude the abilities of strategies or design choices listed below to mitigate them.

EQUITY AND TRUST

Trust among stakeholders underpins the factors contributing to sustainable outcomes during and after MSD. One of many frameworks for analyzing trust more generally in social science identifies five key elements: perceived competence, fairness, good will, consistency, and objectivity.[49] Notably, these are similar to the factors that Bulekely et al. analyze in their examination of the strategies used to legitimate new transnational governance institutions.

Developing trust between citizens and public agencies, as well as between local stakeholders to resolve resource conflicts has been well studied across sectors. In one case, trust was identified as a key factor in the resilience of natural resource management institutions.[50] A 2019 case study of the regional drought contingency plan in the Colorado River Basin found that pushing ahead without a thorough assessment of power dynamics harmed the process as a whole.[51] In the water sector, sensitivity to power imbalances, possibly provided through a natural facilitator or concerted leadership, can lower dropout rates in collaborations.[52]

The process of building trust through deliberative and repeated interactions, provided underlying imbalances are corrected, has been conceptualized in much of the literature as social learning. An

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[48] See Bodin 2017 for a thorough review.

[49] Ortwin Renn and Debra Levine, "Credibility and Trust in Risk Communication," in *Communicating Risks to the Public: International Perspectives*, ed. Roger E. Kasperson and Pieter Jan M. Stallen, Technology, Risk, and Society (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1991), 175–217, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-1952-5_10.

[50] Marc J. Stern and Timothy D. Baird, "Trust Ecology and the Resilience of Natural Resource Management Institutions," *Ecology and Society* 20, no. 2 (2015): art14, https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-07248-200214.

[51] Abigail Sullivan, Dave D. White, and Michael Hanemann, "Designing Collaborative Governance: Insights from the Drought Contingency Planning Process for the Lower Colorado River Basin," *Environmental Science & Policy* 91 (January 1, 2019): 39–49, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.10.011.

[52] Porter and Birdi, "22 Reasons Why Collaborations Fail."

analysis of underlying power relations that assesses assumptions about different stakeholders and their agency is a pre-requisite to and a result of an ongoing social learning process reviewed in the following section.[53]

SOCIAL LEARNING AS A FRAMEWORK

There exists a broad consensus across the literature that dialogue can create common understandings and shared knowledge. This concept has been formalized through an evolving understanding of social learning, the process factors that are conducive to it, and the outcomes that it generates. An emerging concept, social learning is necessary but not sufficient for collaborative management."[54]

Following Collins and Ison (2009),[55] Wehn defines social learning as one or more of the following:

- *Recognizing common goals and purpose*
- *Developing shared insights into the causes of a problem or challenge and, based on that understanding, creating mechanisms to address it.*
- *Changing behavior, based on the new understanding.*
- *An emergent property of the process to transform a situation.*[56]

Following Keen, Cundill and Rodella define social learning as "reflection that occurs amongst different 'individuals and groups as they work to improve the management of human and environmental interrelations.'"[57] Their 2012 review of claims made about social learning processes and outcomes notes that while social learning has been used to refer to disparate processes, the most current consensus is around collective learning to address both social and environmental uncertainties. Such co-production of knowledge has been clearly identified by the STAP as contributing to transformation and integration. In a quantitative analysis of emerging points of consensus in the literature, it is found that deliberative, sustained, and trusting interactions led to social learning. An earlier 2003 review similarly found that eight process characteristics fostered social learning: "open communication, diverse participation, unrestrained thinking, constructive conflict, democratic structure, multiple sources of knowledge, extended engagement, and facilitation."[58]

A 2019 review found, through the analysis of 72 publications, 11 factors conducive to social learning, including varying formal and informal interactions, access both to well packaged, comprehensible

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[53] Cundill and Rodela, "A Review of Assertions about the Processes and Outcomes of Social Learning in Natural Resource Management."

[54] Tania Schusler, Daniel Decker, and Max Pfeffer, "Social Learning for Collaborative Natural Resource Management," *Society & Natural Resources* 16, no. 4 (April 1, 2003): 309–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920390178874.

[55] Kevin Collins and Ray Ison, "Jumping off Arnstein's Ladder: Social Learning as a New Policy Paradigm for Climate Change Adaptation," *Environmental Policy and Governance* 19, no. 6 (November 2009).

[56] Uta Wehn et al., "Stakeholder Engagement in Water Governance as Social Learning: Lessons from Practice," *Water International* 43, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 34–59, https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2018.1403083.

[57] Cundill and Rodela, "A Review of Assertions about the Processes and Outcomes of Social Learning in Natural Resource Management."

[58] Schusler, Decker, and Pfeffer, "Social Learning for Collaborative Natural Resource Management."

information with the ability to access information in further detail, skilled neutral facilitation, and a diversity of participants selected by a neutral facilitator. However, the review noted debate on the effects of underlying normative factors such as procedural fairness, which have been underexplored in the empirical literature directly related to multi-stakeholder dialogue but may have been explored in other literature on policy contexts.[59]

BRIDGING ORGANIZATIONS

Bridging organizations are institutions that use a variety of collaborative mechanisms to link individual actors across a network.[60] In practice, this might take the form of a facilitative working group linking between sectors or across scales.[61]

Boundary spanning leadership has been shown to "increase mutual trust"[62] and help build adequate support in attempts to address environmental problems through far-reaching transformational changes in management and perceptions.[63] A backbone organization is one of the five key principles of a collective impact approach. Pattberg's review of transnational partnerships argues that these organizations may be most effective building on local/existing governance structures and institutions.[64]

Other work finds a key role for bridging organizations in co-management, noting their role beyond knowledge sharing to also assist in "accessing resources, bringing together different actors, building trust, resolving conflict, and networking."[65]

LEADERSHIP

- **Leadership is critical, but the literature does not illuminate how to foster it to support successful region-based transformative change.**

A recent systematic literature review on transnational partnerships notes that both in the peer reviewed literature and in consultations with civil society organizations, while leadership is commonly recognized as a key element of successful partnerships, little empirical evidence was found on conditions that foster

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[59] Ernst, "Review of Factors Influencing Social Learning within Participatory Environmental Governance."

[60] Beatrice Crona and John Parker, "Learning in Support of Governance: Theories, Methods, and a Framework to Assess How Bridging Organizations Contribute to Adaptive Resource Governance," *Ecology and Society* 17, no. 1 (March 29, 2012), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-04534-170132.

[61] Adam Kowalski and Lekelia Jenkins, "The Role of Bridging Organizations in Environmental Management: Examining Social Networks in Working Groups," *Ecology and Society* 20, no. 2 (May 6, 2015), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-07541-200216.

[62] Österblom and Bodin, "Global Cooperation among Diverse Organizations to Reduce Illegal Fishing in the Southern Ocean."

[63] Frances Westley et al., "A Theory of Transformative Agency in Linked Social-Ecological Systems," *Ecology and Society* 18, no. 3 (September 13, 2013), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05072-180327; Per Olsson, Victor Galaz, and Wiebren Boonstra, "Sustainability Transformations: A Resilience Perspective," *Ecology and Society* 19, no. 4 (October 14, 2014), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-06799-190401.

[64] Pattberg and Widerberg, "Transnational Multistakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development."

[65] Fikret Berkes, "Evolution of Co-Management: Role of Knowledge Generation, Bridging Organizations and Social Learning," *Journal of Environmental Management* 90, no. 5 (April 1, 2009): 1692–1702, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2008.12.001.

it in the context of regional MSD that leads to transformational change.[66] However, there exists a wide gray literature, including on mechanisms for fostering collective or systems leadership.[67,68]

More theoretical reviews call for a "policy entrepreneur" who grounds a practical skillset in an understanding of history and policy-related scholarly knowledge.[69] Notwithstanding in many cases the unlikely emergence of such an actor, the need to balance conceptual, theoretical, and pragmatic thought in designing interventions in an MSD, along with sufficient financial and human resources, is a key thread throughout the literature.

CONTEXT-DEPENDENT STRUCTURE OF THE MSD

WHO NEEDS TO BE AT THE TABLE?

- **Intentionality on stakeholders is preferable to an open or overburdened process.**
- **Stakeholders, both in their seniority and their network position, must have the capacity to create change.**

There exists no concrete conclusion in the literature on a blueprint for involving certain stakeholders, given that the process is necessarily context dependent. However, in empirical research and peer-reviewed case studies at the regional level, several context-independent factors emerged as key to building durable platforms for collaboration.

First, many sources stress the importance of being clear about the reason for bringing each party into a MSD.[70] In most cases, dialogue should not be an end in and of itself but rather each stakeholder should be included with an explicit recognition of their perceived role in the dialogue and any resultant partnership or initiative. Similarly, several meta-analyses across different sectors as well as principles in existing regional multi-stakeholder collaborations recognize the importance of clarifying roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders at the outset.[71]

A synthesis of assessments of multi-stakeholder dialogue at regional and national scales in the water sector finds that a key determinant of success and sustainability in the structure of MSD is that stakeholders must have the capacity to enact change (highest level of reference throughout 22 principles applied to the water sector). This related to both the organizations brought to the table and who within the organization had the capacity to enact change, both inside the organization and within

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[66] Pattberg and Widerberg, "Transnational Multistakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development."

[67] See for example "The Dawn of System Leadership (SSIR)," accessed October 13, 2019, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_dawn_of_system_leadership.

[68] Jane Nelson, "Toward New Models of Leadership and Partnership," in *Perspectives on Impact*, ed. Nina Montgomery, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019), 30–45, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452796-4.

[69] See for a long list Cashore et al., "Designing Stakeholder Learning Dialogues for Effective Global Governance," January 2, 2019, 140.

[70] See for example *Multi - Stakeholder Partnerships Issue Paper.* (Kuala Lumpur: Global knowledge partnership secretariat, 2003)..

[71] GAIN incorporates written agreement on stakeholder roles and responsibilities into their principles. See the "Case Studies" section for further details.

the broader Theory of Change.[72] The assessment also articulated a need for ways to encourage the formal commitment of stakeholders, such as MOUs or other incentive structures, whether formal or reputational.

In arriving at a general set of principles for multi-stakeholder partnerships, Bezanson and Isenman examined twelve case studies, including the CGIAR and GAIN.[73] They found, supported by other peer reviewed analyses of global health vertical partnerships, that a failure by CGIAR to effectively engage civil society stakeholders, in the eyes of independent evaluators, largely lay in its failure to explain why they had brought civil society to the table, which resulted in frustration because of a lack of meaningful avenues to engage in the governance of the network.

Scholars of governance have approached the question of who should be at the table primarily from the perspective of legitimacy. In most cases, legitimacy is implied to be undergirded by the concept of democratic legitimacy, concerned with instances in which partnerships "govern" beyond the purview of the state; however, alternate frames of legitimacy not formed around democratic ideals have been proposed.[74] Using this lens of analysis, in an examination of who started 60 transnational climate change governance initiatives, Bulkeley et al. find that private actors, in many cases, attempted to engage civil society and public sector actors, in part to legitimize their intervention in governance.

However, engaging stakeholders with diverse interests on the basis of common values may dilute the problem definition. A robust literature on corporate capture in domestic contexts reaches this conclusion in many instances. Cashore et al. argue that in this situation, it may be better to agree on a problem definition and goal within a small group, and later engage stakeholders who might have the potential to shift or dilute the mission of the dialogue.[75]

This review found scant literature on the relationship of scale to legitimacy, and ways in which legitimacy or trust works at different scales, but practitioner experience suggests that in a multi-scalar, regional intervention, such concerns may be relevant to the durability of the MSP as a whole.

HOW SHOULD THE DIALOGUE PROCESS BE STRUCTURED? HOW INVOLVED SHOULD STAKEHOLDERS BE?

- **A Theory of Change that considers who has the capacity to enact change through a thorough analysis of social and political contexts may be a tool that allows for an effective process for evaluating the depth of network needed, given trade-offs in efficiency and resources required.**
- **Cooperation problems require more dense networks with frequent interactions, whereas looser networks with more centralized interaction may accomplish goals and be more efficient in addressing coordination problems.**

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[72] Porter and Birdi, "22 Reasons Why Collaborations Fail," 104.

[73] Bezanson and Isenman, "Governance of New Global Partnerships: Challenges, Weaknesses, and Lessons."

[74] Steven Bernstein, "Legitimacy in Intergovernmental and Non-State Global Governance," *Review of International Political Economy* 18, no. 1 (February 7, 2011): 17–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290903173087.

[75] Cashore et al., "Designing Stakeholder Learning Dialogues for Effective Global Governance," January 2, 2019.

- **Principled and varied engagement helps actors who are less central to engage productively in the activities of a multi-stakeholder initiative.**

Historically, literature on stakeholder participation has assumed or stated explicitly that higher rungs on the 'ladder of participation' are preferable.[76] However, more recent literature has suggested that different levels of engagement could be suitable for different contexts depending on the goals of the engagement process and the ability of stakeholders to influence the outcome.[77] A robust literature provides guidance on participatory method design for different scales and contexts.[78]

A governance perspective, similar to legitimacy considerations of the number and sector of actors, considers what level of engagement provides the requisite legitimacy for the MSD to accomplish its mission, either stand-alone or in supporting the objectives of an MSP.[79]

Literature on network analysis points to the potential of networks to exacerbate inequities between stakeholders in ability to access resources through collaborative governance regimes. In an empirical study, it was found that those who participated in one or more collaborative governance regimes had stronger ties than those participating in only one regime, and thus had unequal access to resources in the new governance regime.[80]

A high degree of institutionalization – involving formalized structure and obligation --- leads to higher degrees of success in cases in which collaboration is shown to be costly (defined here as cooperation problems), whereas looser forms of stakeholder engagement may be preferable for knowledge exchange.[81]

The same study that found a disadvantage to marginally involved network actors noted that "principled engagement", consisting of common problem understanding and face-to-face interaction, could ease access to resources.[82]

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[76] The canonical text in the field is Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (July 1969): 216–24, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225.

[77] Reed, "Stakeholder Participation for Environmental Management," 2420; Joanne Tippett, John F. Handley, and Joe Ravetz, "Meeting the Challenges of Sustainable Development—A Conceptual Appraisal of a New Methodology for Participatory Ecological Planning," *Progress in Planning*, Meeting the challenges of sustainable development-conceptual appraisal of a new methodology for participatory ecological planning, 67, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 9–98, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2006.12.004.

[78] Reed, "Stakeholder Participation for Environmental Management," 2425.

[79] See for example Karin Bäckstrand, "Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Rethinking Legitimacy, Accountability and Effectiveness," *European Environment* 16, no. 5 (2006): 290–306, https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.425; Sébastien Mena and Guido Palazzo, "Input and Output Legitimacy of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (July 2012): 527–56, https://doi.org/10.5840/beq201222333.

[80] Tyler A Scott and Craig W Thomas, "Winners and Losers in the Ecology of Games: Network Position, Connectivity, and the Benefits of Collaborative Governance Regimes," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 27, no. 4 (2017): 14.

[81] Marianne Beisheim and Sabine Campe, "Transnational Public–Private Partnerships' Performance in Water Governance: Institutional Design Matters," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 30, no. 4 (August 1, 2012): 627–42, https://doi.org/10.1068/c1194.

[82] Scott and Thomas, "Winners and Losers in the Ecology of Games: Network Position, Connectivity, and the Benefits of Collaborative Governance Regimes."

DEVELOPING COMMON GOALS FOR THE PROCESS

The Theory of Change planning process continues once stakeholders begin to meet and gain a better understanding of the goals and expected outcomes of the process. Here, again, it is important to distinguish between coordination and cooperation and other temporal and scale aspects of a problem that an MSD is meant to solve.

Several scholars argue that specificity in goals provides incentive for stakeholders to invest resources in working towards the goals of the partnership.[83,84] However, this relationship between the level of ambition and stringency of goals and outcomes may depend on the level of conflicting interests in the problem at hand and whether a specific goal might impede collaboration.[85] The idea that consensus is necessarily a precursor for collaboration, while not explicitly explored in the examined literature, may not bear out in practice. In negotiation theory, the concept of constructive ambiguity as well as the importance of raising costs of defection is well explored.

However, particularly in the case of private sector engagement or diverse coalitions, scholars caution that "destructive ambiguity" might masquerade as constructive ambiguity, where goals are either too vague to retain an impactful problem framing or multiply to the extent where every actor has a pet goal and the dialogue consists solely of attempting to balance those goals rather than creating impact.[86]

Cashore calls for processes to make explicit assumptions about different priorities within problem definition efforts, delineating four types ways of considering hierarchies of problems.[87] If, in a "Type IV" problem in which one catastrophic outcome needs to be averted at all costs, business or other actors attempt to shift the understanding of the problem towards one that implicitly requires trade-offs (i.e. between environmental and political outcomes), such engagement should be considered later in the process.

There is broad agreement, touching on the precursors above, that the process by which goals are set and coherence with broader frameworks is as important as content of goals themselves.

CO-PRODUCTION AND INTEGRATING EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

- **Access to information is a key factor contributing to effective social learning.**
- **Accessible, non-technical, and traditional knowledge are important for balancing power dynamics and result in stronger participation from non-expert stakeholders.**

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[83] Robert O. Keohane and David G. Victor, "The Regime Complex for Climate Change," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 1 (2011): 7–23.

[84] Andrea Liese and Marianne Beisheim, "Transnational Public-Private-Partnerships and the Provision of Collective Goods in Developing Countries," in *Governance without a State?*, ed. Thomas Risse (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[85] Blake Ratner, "Collaboration without Consensus," accessed October 8, 2019, https://rethink.earth/collaboration-without-consensus/.

[86] Cashore et al., "Designing Stakeholder Learning Dialogues for Effective Global Governance," January 2, 2019, 123.

[87] In Type I problems, participants frame the problem as a "win/win" effort to avoid a tragedy of the commons; in Type II problems, participants engage in a classical cost-benefit analysis of trade-offs between different priorities; in Type III problems, participants see a need to compromise between win/lose priorities; and in Type IV problems, averting a catastrophic outcome (e.g. climate change, biodiversity loss) is deemed so important that it overrules other priorities.

As noted above, a review study found that the provision of comprehensible information with the ability to access information in further detail if needed was a process determinant of effective social learning, which in turn influences the ability of MSD to influence systemic change.[88]

There has been significant discussion of the importance of integrating traditional/non-scientific knowledge into participatory planning and interactions between citizens and governments. The general need (and current lack of progress) in incorporating traditional knowledge or multiple evidence bases into international processes is well reviewed.[89]

Literature on marine planning finds that a two-way, participatory process may be an important predictor of the incorporation of science into the process in the case of government-led regional planning initiatives,[90] considering scientists as a stakeholder group to be engaged rather than an expert external to the process. Other work notes that Swiss conservation professionals were more likely to engage with experts and colleagues than consult evidence-based sources, often in writing.[91] Given these findings, Significant gray literature investigates the process of fact-finding and the use of technical experts in closely related consensus-building processes.[92]

FROM ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT TO ADAPTATION PATHWAYS

A key distinguishing point in the literature on iteration and continuous learning in multi-stakeholder processes is between a largely older literature on adaptive management of social systems, a similar literature concerned with the co-management of ecosystems, and a newer literature on the adaptive co-management of socio-ecological systems.[93] In aggregate, sources identify several key considerations in effective adaptive co-management:

- **Power sharing, institution building, and a multi-stakeholder process are key element of an iterative process**, as literature notes that in most cases, power asymmetries pre-exist collaborations and governments are rarely ready to form organic partnerships.[94]

- **Alongside the integration of information, because of the dynamic nature of social and ecological systems, the literature stresses the provision of information to participants throughout the process and not simply at the beginning.** In parallel, using a resilience lens, scholars have long noted that adaptive management can help incorporate factors and implicit assumptions that were not clear at the beginning of the process.

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[88] Ernst, "Review of Factors Influencing Social Learning within Participatory Environmental Governance."

[89] William J. Sutherland et al., "How Can Local and Traditional Knowledge Be Effectively Incorporated into International Assessments?," *Oryx* 48, no. 1 (January 2014): 1–2, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605313001543.

[90] Meghan J. Massaua, Craig W. Thomas, and Terrie Klinger, "The Use of Science in Collaborative Management of Marine Environments," *Coastal Management* 44, no. 6 (November 2016): 606–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/08920753.2016.1233797.

[91] Yvonne Fabian et al., "How to Close the Science-Practice Gap in Nature Conservation? Information Sources Used by Practitioners," *Biological Conservation* 235 (July 2019): 93–101, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.04.011.

[92] Lawrence E. Susskind, Sarah McKearnen, and Jennifer Thomas-Lamar, *The Consensus Building Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement* (SAGE, 1999).

[93] Cundill and Rodela, "A Review of Assertions about the Processes and Outcomes of Social Learning in Natural Resource Management."

[94] Berkes, "Evolution of Co-Management."

- **Another key element of adaptive management for MSD is iterative learning and monitoring. One vehicle to do this is results chains.**[95] Similar to a "Theory of Change" (discussed previously), a results chain depicts a logic for how transformation occurs, linking outcomes through a series of intermediate results. Iterative clear communication of roles and responsibilities through the process of establishing and communicating results chains echoes other literature on the importance of such expectations, although primarily discussed at the beginning of the process.

- **The Adaptive Pathways approach has roots in adaptive planning in environmental management and the decision and policy sciences.** It helps users to explore and plan sequences of actions (pathways) in response to changing conditions.[96] The literature frames the approach as both technical but also involving social norms and societal values that underlie problems, with a goal of encouraging greater responsiveness and the adaptation of institutional structures to expedite problem solving.[97] It is not strongly tied to MSD efforts based on this review; however, it may assist in understanding of socio-ecological systems in an anticipatory manor as advocated in various other frameworks.

  Note: From a practitioner perspective, adaptive management is easy to implement in theory and difficult in practice, once project plans have been solidified and resources have been mobilized. Limited peer literature reviewed examines the tension between existing incentive structures and adaptive management.

STAP has already considered that "Acknowledging the additional effort involved in this approach, and STAP suggests that GEF could improve integration by allowing flexibility in project preparation to accommodate the additional transactions costs and time required to tackle complex issues through multi-agency teams. (One approach would be to allow the detailed project plan to be further developed after approval, as the first stage of project implementation, to enable meaningful stakeholder engagement in devising the system description and assessment and the design of implementation pathways.) … Transformational change necessarily entails risk."[98]

SKILLED FACILITATION IN PRACTICE

Many studies reviewed identify skilled facilitation that can set clear policies and procedures as an important element in sustaining and building equity and trust as a multi-stakeholder process moves forward. While a mix of peer-reviewed and gray literature articulates different aspects of skilled facilitation, it is difficult to isolate and identify the contribution of skilled facilitation directly to transformational change.

EXIT RAMPS AND ACQUIRING CONTINUED SUPPORT

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[95] Richard Margoluis et al., "Results Chains: A Tool for Conservation Action Design, Management, and Evaluation," *Ecology and Society* 18, no. 3 (September 5, 2013), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05610-180322.

[96] K. Bosomworth and E. Gaillard, "Engaging with Uncertainty and Ambiguity through Participatory `Adaptive Pathways' Approaches: Scoping the Literature," *Environmental Research Letters* 14, no. 9 (September 2019): 093007, https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ab3095.

[97] R. M. Wise et al., "Reconceptualising Adaptation to Climate Change as Part of Pathways of Change and Response," *Global Environmental Change* 28 (September 1, 2014): 325–36, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.12.002.

[98] "Integration: To Solve Complex Environmental Problems" (Global Environment Facility, June 2018), https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/STAP%20Report%20on%20integration.PDF.

An important component when considering durability of MSDs relates to their long-term sustainability and what happens to the initiative once its initial mission or purpose is complete. As described above, the overall effectiveness and outcomes of an MSD should be considered for the durability of the outcome goals, not the longevity of the partnership, initiative, or other process goals. There has been very little systematic study of the reasons, planning, procedures, or best practices associated sustainability planning or exit planning to formally dissolve the group or initiative, despite an intuitive sense that it is important and has potential implications for the outcomes.

For example, there is evidence that effective exit planning may support better outcomes by supporting strong multi-stakeholder engagement until the end, instead of a slow disengagement.[99] Having a clear end objective can result in stronger, deeper engagement of participants.

Van Huijstee cautions that multi-stakeholder initiatives without an exit strategy can be used by business as an insurance policy against negative publicity without actually having to make any effort to alter their behavior.[100] The literature that does exist focuses on the timing and ease of exit provisions for various actors—if it is too easy then it may be seen as a "coalition of the willing," with little meaningful change and lacking trust, deeper commitment, and durability to navigate challenging topics. If it is too hard to leave, the coalition may become inefficient or draw out past its immediate utility.[101]

Long-term funding can also be a significant challenge for multi-stakeholder initiatives. Reviews found evidence that securing continued funding is more difficult than initial funding.[102] Bodin notes that "a fundamental challenge is to better understand how collaborative endeavors can be better adopted by formal bureaucracies and incorporated into existing government structures and processes" to ensure their sustainability beyond project-specific funding. Identifying the long-term institutional home can be a successful sustainability opportunity.[103]

Measuring Impact: Demonstrating that MSDs Influence Transformation

Assessing broader outcomes from MSD in practice is fraught with difficulty,[104] and isolating the impact of multi-stakeholder dialogue is more difficult still. Because of the further challenges and inevitable time lag in conclusively assessing transformative change, this section focuses on measuring and monitoring multi-stakeholder platforms more generally.

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[99] Ranjay Gulati, Maxim Sytch, and Parth Mehrotra, "Breaking up Is Never Easy: Planning for Exit in a Strategic Alliance," *California Management Review* 50, no. 4 (July 1, 2008): 147–63, https://doi.org/10.2307/41166460.

[100] Mariette van Huijstee, "Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives: A Strategic Guide for Civil Society Organizations," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, March 12, 2012), https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2117933.

[101] Gulati, Sytch, and Mehrotra, "Breaking up Is Never Easy."

[102] Pattberg and Widerberg, "Transnational Multistakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development."

[103] Bodin, "Collaborative Environmental Governance."

[104] Anne D Guerry et al., "Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services Informing Decisions: From Promise to Practice," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2015, 8.

In addition to the importance of measuring impact to improve learning, transparent M&E has been linked to process legitimacy,[105] which can increase trust and influence several factors noted above, although later research has linked transparency to technocratic and private, rather than public-good focused, rationales.[106]

Similar efforts to understand additionality, the interplay between the local and the global, the linkages between process and outcome indicators, and second- and third-order causal factors have also been undertaken to better measure the impact of community and regional-scale climate change adaptation initiatives, primarily by IIED and GIZ.[107]

DETERMINING A BASELINE FOR LATER MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There is a wide recognition, both in older literature oriented towards participatory governance, as well as NGO assessments of the efficacy of supply chain initiatives to engage the private sector, of the importance of establishing baselines to achieve effective impact measurement.[108] Specifics are elaborated in the frameworks below.

MEASURING PROCESS VARIABLES

The Moore Foundation and others have considered the importance of participatory and dynamic MEL across several contexts, which will not be further reviewed here.

Survey methodologies have quantified belief change among stakeholders as well as assessed the casual effect of collaboration on increased acceptable of policy alternatives.[109] Several frameworks assessed below also include survey methodologies for assessing process variables that could be explored in more detail.

The Climate Change and Social Learning Initiative (CCSL), facilitated through CGIAR,[110] developed a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess four dimensions of social learning that they elaborated into a causal framework explored below. A synthesis of findings summarized first in grey literature[111]

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[105] Aarti Gupta and Michael Mason, *Transparency in Global Environmental Governance: Critical Perspectives* (MIT Press, 2014).

[106] Aarti Gupta and Michael Mason, "Disclosing or Obscuring? The Politics of Transparency in Global Climate Governance," *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, Sustainability governance and transformation 2016: Informational governance and environmental sustainability, 18 (February 1, 2016): 82–90, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2015.11.004.

[107] "Adaptation Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit," Adaptation Community, 2019, https://www.adaptationcommunity.net/monitoring-evaluation/toolbox/.

[108] See for example Reed, "Stakeholder Participation for Environmental Management"; Bezanson and Isenman, "Governance of New Global Partnerships: Challenges, Weaknesses, and Lessons"; "Certification and Roundtables: Do They Work?" (WWF, 2010), https://community.isealalliance.org/sites/default/files/finalMSIreview_13.09.2010.pdf.

[109] See for example Rob van Tulder et al., "Enhancing the Impact of Cross-Sector Partnerships," *Journal of Business Ethics* 135, no. 1 (April 1, 2016): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2756-4; Anna Ernst, "Research Techniques and Methodologies to Assess Social Learning in Participatory Environmental Governance," *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 23 (December 1, 2019): 100331, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2019.100331.

[110] "Climate Change and Social Learning Initiative," August 7, 2015, https://ccafs.cgiar.org/climate-change-and-social-learning-initiative.

[111] Marissa Van Epp and Ben Garside, *Solving 'Wicked' Problems: Can Social Learning Catalyse Adaptive Responses to Climate Change?* (International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 2016).

and later in the peer-reviewed literature[112] tracks progression from processes to outcomes across regional adaptation and other initiatives in an African and Asian context in several dimensions: engagement, capacity development, and iterative learning.

Recent work in network analysis and measurement of social learning builds on theoretical work to provide a framework for monitoring. Network structure and changes in network density can be considered another proxy for monitoring the effectiveness and potential durability of multi-stakeholder dialogue. One collaborative research effort explored the use of network analysis is assessing several different MSDs associated with development projects worldwide, demonstrating the potential to improve understanding of what configurations of MSD might prove most effective.[113] Using a survey methodology to map networks considering both levels of relationship types and frequency of communication, the study was able to draw conclusions about central players and isolated subgroups in networks. Notably, the authors caution against a prescriptive approach and not that a menu of tools for analysis and early and frequent contact between project teams and network analysts will help match the network analysis to the nuances of the process.

TENTATIVE FRAMEWORKS TO LINK PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

A nascent literature attempts to link environmental outcomes to the application of collaborative governance. This literature is not yet fully formed on a regional level, and in some cases relies on a large number of watersheds to make generalized comparisons without the use of an individual control, put provides a signpost towards an empirical methodology.[114]

A group of researchers is attempting to establish causal relationships between process variables and the outcomes of adaptive co-management.[115] The group recently published a case study applying the framework to UNESCO Biosphere reserves, finding that in a model linking process variables of collaboration and learning, they were not significant predictors for outcomes but did explain a substantial amount of the variability in effects.[116] They note the importance of empirically "[capturing] the activities, practices and/or other factors" that underpin process in future research in order to substantiate a framework for monitoring that allows for the demonstration of the effectiveness of collaborative governance.

In the realm of evaluation, scholars have used process-tracing methods based on a review of meeting minutes and other written documentation to evaluate the importance of collaboration in different

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[112] Marissa Van Epp and Ben Garside, "Towards an Evidence Base on the Value of Social Learning-Oriented Approaches in the Context of Climate Change and Food Security," *Environmental Policy and Governance* 29, no. 2 (2019): 118–31, https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1835.

[113] Lubell et al., "Social Network Analysis for SCALE® Monitoring and Evaluation."

[114] Tyler Scott, "Does Collaboration Make Any Difference? Linking Collaborative Governance to Environmental Outcomes," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 34, no. 3 (2015): 537–66, https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21836.

[115] Ryan Plummer et al., "Diagnosing Adaptive Comanagement across Multiple Cases," *Ecology and Society* 22, no. 3 (August 31, 2017), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09436-220319.

[116] Ryan Plummer et al., "Is Adaptive Co-Management Delivering? Examining Relationships Between Collaboration, Learning and Outcomes in UNESCO Biosphere Reserves," *Ecological Economics* 140 (October 1, 2017): 79–88, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2017.04.028.

scenarios ex-post.[117] However, the example of this methodology found in the literature review was applied in an American national context.

The robust testing of those frameworks, in combination with qualitative participatory monitoring, is a place where GEF monitoring and evaluation could possibly contribute to future use of process variables as proxy indicators for monitoring the potential effectiveness of MSD processes.

Case Studies

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

In recent years, a "roundtable" model of multi-stakeholder collaboration on supply chain sustainability has proliferated. The most mature of these initiatives is the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), which was established in 2002 and has since grown to over 4,000 members representing oil palm producers, processors or traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks/investors, and environmental and social NGOs. The RSPO has developed Principles and Criteria for sustainable palm oil and a global certification system. Today, 19% of global palm oil is certified by the RSPO.[118]

The RSPO has received criticisms of "greenwashing," and assessments of its impacts on the ground are mixed.[119] Reasons for these mixed impacts in the literature include challenges with supply chain governance, local and regional political contexts, and characteristics of the RSPO's certification system. However, overall, the internal structure and procedures of the RSPO have been favorably discussed, and a number of other roundtables have been based on its model. Notably, a criticism that transcends the literature concerns the insufficient inclusion of smallholders in the RSPO's membership, certification system, and on-the-ground behavior change.

A few major characteristics of the RSPO's multi-stakeholder model affect its effectiveness:

- **Stakeholder representation.** The RSPO originated through an informal group formed by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and companies Unilever, Aarhus United UK Ltd, Migros, and the Malaysian Palm Oil Association. The bridge created between two high-status actors – WWF from the civil society sector and Unilever from the private sector – attracted early credibility and interest, including from other private sector actors concerned about the business-friendliness of such sustainability initiatives.[120] The RSPO progressively grew to include other high-status stakeholders, and through a large membership that represents diverse sectors of the supply

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[117] Nicola Ulibarri, "Tracing Process to Performance of Collaborative Governance: A Comparative Case Study of Federal Hydropower Licensing," *Policy Studies Journal* 43, no. 2 (May 1, 2015): 283–308, https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12096.

[118] "Homepage," accessed October 31, 2019, https://rspo.org/.

[119] Notably, however, nearly three-quarters of the RSPO's members joined in the past five years; as a result, it may be too soon to evaluate the impacts (and longevity of the impacts) of the RSPO as it relates to these members' behavior change.

[120] Greetje Schouten and Pieter Glasbergen, "Private Multi-Stakeholder Governance in the Agricultural Market Place: An Analysis of Legitimization Processes of the Roundtables on Sustainable Palm Oil and Responsible Soy," *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review* 15, no. Special Issue B (2012): 63–88.

chain, the RSPO's members collectively cover a significant proportion of the global palm oil supply chain. However, the RSPO still struggles with smallholder inclusion – a shortcoming it acknowledges.[121] Some argue that this gap in participation has harmed the RSPO's legitimacy and effectiveness.[122]

- **Organizational structure.** The RSPO is ran day-to-day by a Secretariat and managed by a Board of Governors that represents each stakeholder group and is elected by the RSPO's General Assembly. All RSPO members have a vote in the General Assembly, where in addition to voting on the Board, they can influence the organization's strategic direction (the General Assembly is the RSPO's highest decision-making body). These opportunities for stakeholder participation lend the initiative legitimacy and increase the degree to which third parties accept its outcomes and decisions.[123] Schouten et. al (2012) observed that most opposition from campaigning NGOs – including those who are not members of the RPSO – was not directed at the RSPO and its standard, but rather towards members of the RSPO that violated the standard (this stands in contrast to campaigns that directly oppose the initiative itself).[124] Through working groups, smaller groups of members address particular issues. In this way, contentious issues are first discussed in more restricted and efficient settings, but different interests can still access information via their representatives on the working group and participate in the RSPO's deliberative processes.[125]

- **Consensus approach.** The RSPO describes itself as a "multi-stakeholder, participatory roundtable that works on the basis of consensus." To achieve consensus, contentious issues and more "radical" viewpoints have at times been avoided or excluded in the RSPO; amongst actors involved in or observing the RSPO, this has both received criticism and been justified for the sake of efficiency and maintaining pragmatic dialogue between NGOs and the private sector.[126]

Global Alliance for the Improvement of Nutrition (GAIN)

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[121] "RSPO Smallholders Engagement Platform - Home," accessed October 31, 2019, http://rsep.rspo.org/.

[122] Emmanuelle Cheyns, "Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives for Sustainable Agriculture: Limits of the 'Inclusiveness' Paradigm," in *Governing through Standards*, ed. Stefano Ponte, Peter Gibbon, and Jakob Vestergaard (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 210–35, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-34830-1_9.

[123] Greetje Schouten, Pieter Leroy, and Pieter Glasbergen, "On the Deliberative Capacity of Private Multi-Stakeholder Governance: The Roundtables on Responsible Soy and Sustainable Palm Oil," *Ecological Economics*, Sustainability in Global Product Chains, 83 (November 1, 2012): 42–50, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2012.08.007; Schouten and Glasbergen, "Private Multi-Stakeholder Governance in the Agricultural Market Place: An Analysis of Legitimization Processes of the Roundtables on Sustainable Palm Oil and Responsible Soy."

[124] Schouten and Glasbergen, "Private Multi-Stakeholder Governance in the Agricultural Market Place: An Analysis of Legitimization Processes of the Roundtables on Sustainable Palm Oil and Responsible Soy."

[125] Cheyns, "Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives for Sustainable Agriculture."

[126] Schouten and Glasbergen, "Private Multi-Stakeholder Governance in the Agricultural Market Place: An Analysis of Legitimization Processes of the Roundtables on Sustainable Palm Oil and Responsible Soy."

The following case example is excerpted from a 2012 article in *Food and Nutrition Bulletin* by Regina Moench-Pfanner and Marc Van Ameringen, entitled "The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN): A decade of partnerships to increase access to and affordability of nutritious foods for the poor."[127]

> *The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) was established in 2002 with a mandate to galvanize the public and private sectors to end malnutrition. Originally housed within the United Nations system, GAIN launched its first large-scale fortification program in 2003. In its first decade, it scaled operations to reach more than 610 million people with nutritionally enhanced foods. Positive fortification results were reported in South Africa[128] and China.[129] These results were achieved by investing in and working alongside governments, businesses, civil society partners, and academia through complex large-scale partnerships in more than 30 countries. While GAIN had success in these and other countries, it was difficult to reach the nutritionally vulnerable living in rural areas who were often less likely to consume industrially produced, fortifiable staple foods.*

> *GAIN's early work required that country fortification programs be governed by a National Fortification Alliance or similar stakeholder platform. These alliances brought together different private sector partners (e.g., millers, oil refiners, bakers, and premix suppliers), government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Health, Ministry of Industry, Food Control Agency, Bureau of Standards), civil society (e.g., consumer associations or nongovernmental organizations working on nutrition and health communication), researchers, and others.*

> *The activities of each National Fortification Alliance were facilitated by an Executing Agency, which was awarded grants and was accountable for the project's financial management at the country level. In an effort to maximize the likelihood of sustainability and country ownership, national public sector agencies were encouraged to take on the Executing Agency function. National organizations, such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Industry, or Bureau of Standards, were thought to be best placed to garner political support, convene multisector partners, and mobilize their agencies' national networks for implementation of quality control and social marketing activities. GAIN relied on a separately contracted, in-country program advisor to monitor and report on activities and expenditures.*

> *Project funding was initially provided for 3 years, a period thought sufficient for a national fortification program to achieve full-scale implementation. At this stage, projects were expected to become sustainable, with recurrent costs for inputs like premix, quality control supplies, and social marketing to be absorbed by governments and the private sector or passed on to consumers. Management responsibilities were to be integrated permanently into existing institutional structures of government and industrial partners.*

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[127] Regina Moench-Pfanner and Marc Van Ameringen, "The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN): A Decade of Partnerships to Increase Access to and Affordability of Nutritious Foods for the Poor," *Food and Nutrition Bulletin* 33, no. 4_suppl3 (December 2012): S373–80, https://doi.org/10.1177/15648265120334S313.

[128] Neural tube defects were reduced by 30% in South Africa after folic acid was added to maize meal and wheat flour.

[129] In China, data collected from 21 sentinel sites showed that anemia dropped by more than 30% following the fortification of soy sauce with iron.

Project governance and management were challenging. When functioning properly, the National Fortification Alliance structure proved successful as a platform for dialogue and coordination among multisector players. However, these alliances were not always representative of all sectors, were sometimes overly formal and non-participatory, and generally met too infrequently to be of use in problem-solving or day-to-day key decision-making. Likewise, Executing Agencies were not always optimal. Public sector bureaucracies could sometimes add unnecessary administrative delays to key activities that slowed projects down. The private sector, which relied on government agencies to set fortification standards, determine quality testing procedures, and regulate other aspects of fortification, became frustrated with unforeseen delays and sometimes lost interest while projects were delayed by politics and planning.

The 3-year time frame for laying the foundation of a sustainable food fortification program was unrealistic. It proved much more difficult and time-consuming to enact mandatory fortification legislation, create and sustain the operations of government quality control bodies, create consumer awareness and demand for fortified products, and generally integrate fortification into existing government plans and budgets than initially anticipated. Without these foundational building blocks, companies had little incentive to continue fortifying their products after the project ended.

Fast forwarding to 2019, based on a review of the GAIN website, it is clear that the organization has adapted its focus well beyond its supply-driven fortification origins:

We began 15 years ago with a belief that fortifying staple foods such as flour, oil and salt could help tackle poor nutrition, and since then we have worked with many partners to make fortified staple foods available to more than 1 billion people. GAIN has achieved much progress toward that goal. Now, it is increasingly clear that food systems, which shape the demand, availability, affordability, convenience and desirability of foods, actually contribute to the poor diets that result in poor nutrition and have become the number-one risk factor for ill health. To help transform food systems so that they enable people's consumption of safe, nutritious foods, we have adopted three interlinked strategic objectives: 1. To improve the demand for safe, nutritious foods. 2. To increase the availability and affordability of safe, nutritious foods. 3. To strengthen the enabling environment to improve the consumption of safe, nutritious foods.

While it is unclear how central MSD is to GAIN's current operations, their website does include Principles of Engagement.[130] This document describes how GAIN will work with others and what the characteristics of that engagement must contain.

In summary, GAIN has had impressive results in the past 16 years, some of which are most likely attributable to its multi-stakeholder convening and partnership model. That said, there have been costs for this approach – transaction costs and project delays among others. Existing case studies imply that GAIN was broadly inclusive with the National Fortification Alliances to ensure efforts were trusted at the country level. Given the complexity of nutrition space is very complex, the principles clearly articulate awareness of sensitivities given the role of food in cultures and livelihoods.

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[130] "GAIN Principles of Engagement," Accessed October 31, 2019, https://www.gainhealth.org/sites/default/files/policies/gain-principles-of-engagement.pdf

As the article and the gray literature suggest, there needs to be more rigorous study of what works and does not work in global nutrition public-private engagement and collaboration to attribute the benefits and costs with any certainty.

African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF)

Diverse strands of the literature – network analysis, collective impact, and work on collaborative governance – discuss the importance of boundary spanners and backbone organizations to manage risk in collaborative undertakings. This is in part to mediate risky relationships among the other suite of tasks these organizations perform. The African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) is such an example.

The AATF was established in 2002 through a partnership between The Rockefeller Foundation and Meridian Institute, with eventual funding support from DFID and USAID. Meridian managed two years of consultations between a wide range of stakeholders from Africa, North America and Europe to determine mechanisms for sharing advanced agricultural technologies between North American and European companies and research institutions and African agricultural research institutions working to improve staple crops for smallholder farmers. Discussions focused on institutional arrangements that would facilitate access to technologies that were not being made available for staple crops in Africa, reduce risks for technology donors, and spur the development of improved varieties that would address food insecurity challenges. In part, the AATF was formed in response to risks that the agricultural research for development community was facing due to stringent intellectual property restrictions being placed on agricultural research. It was also formed to ensure that technology transfer took place appropriately and that sufficient controls – such as biosafety protocols – were put in place in the recipient countries.

To ensure appropriate stakeholder involvement in the design and business plan development, a Design Advisory Committee (DAC) was appointed, comprising representatives from African National Agricultural Research organizations, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), African seed and biotech companies, crop science companies and other organizations holding proprietary rights to potentially useful technologies, and donor organizations. The AATF is a UK-based private charity based in Nairobi, Kenya. Representatives from these groups continue to serve on the AATF's Board of Directors 17 years later.

AATF's website attempts to clearly articulate its value-added:[131]

- *It provides a much-needed 'one-stop-shop' for enabling access to proprietary technologies, knowledge and know-how;*
- *It serves as an ''honest broker'' in negotiating the royalty-free transfer of technologies held by advanced public and private research institutes in developed and developing countries;*
- *It works all along the product value chain, from basic research, through adaptive research and development, distribution, production and marketing;*

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[131] "About Us," Accessed October 31, 2019, https://www.aatf-africa.org/about-us.

- *The Foundation uses its convening power to bring together diverse potential partners from the public and private sectors, and in so doing serves as a catalyst for innovations, reforms and the creation of agricultural markets.*

The AATF is clearly designed to mitigate risk and establish linkages between disparate stakeholders in a network, including explicit clauses to build trust. Further research is needed to better understand the role that process and governance plays in the level of AATF's continued ability to fulfill its mission.

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