In recent years, multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) have become popular for tackling the complex challenges of sustainable development. This guide provides a practical framework for the design and facilitation of these collaborative processes that work across the boundaries of business, government, civil society and science. The guide links the underlying rationale for multi-stakeholder partnerships, with a clear four phase process model, a set of seven core principles, key ideas for facilitation and 60 participatory tools for analysis, planning and decision making.

The guide has been written for those directly involved in MSPs – as a stakeholder, leader, facilitator or funder – to provide both the conceptual foundations and practical tools that underpin successful partnerships.

What’s inside draws on the direct experience of staff from the Centre of Development Innovation (CDI), at Wageningen University & Research Centre, in supporting MSP processes in many countries around the world. The guide also compiles the ideas and materials behind CDI’s annual three week international course on facilitating MSPs and social learning.

This work has been inspired by the motivation and passion that comes when people dare to “walk in each other’s shoes” to find new paths toward shared ambitions for the future.

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The RaTionale for using MSPs to tackle complex sustainability challenges

4 Phases that guide the design of MSP processes

7 Principles to follow that help make MSPs successful

Key ideas for effective facilitation of MSPs

60 Participatory tools that enable people to work together constructively and creatively
Preface

Welcome to this guide on facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs).

For more than a decade, the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) has been running an annual three-week international course on facilitating MSPs and social learning. This course evolved from the diverse experience of CDI staff in initiating, facilitating, and participating in multi-stakeholder partnerships in many parts of the world. Over the years, the course has been refined based on insights and feedback from hundreds of course participants. Versions of the course have also been tailor-made for numerous clients across business, government, and civil society. The guide distils this wealth of experience for a wider audience.

Today’s complex and interconnected world clearly needs collaboration and partnerships between interest groups spanning the boundaries of business, government, civil society, and science. But bringing about such collaboration is no simple matter. It requires deep understanding of what enables and what stops people from working together. It requires patience, time, and commitment from leaders. However, with the right mindset, and by using the practical process steps and tools offered in this guide, much can be done to unlock people’s potential to cooperate and innovate for social and environmental good.

The guide integrates practical knowledge with theoretical foundations and principles. While practical facilitation methods and tools are essential, it is even more important to be able to design processes around the underlying dynamics of human systems, power relations, conflict, and teamwork. We draw on diverse schools of thought to offer facilitators and stakeholders in partnerships a set of principles and conceptual models to help inspire creative and critical processes of change.

Our approach to MSPs has strong roots in participatory development, which has become a cornerstone of effective development cooperation. Participatory development grew from participatory rural appraisal (PRA). This work pioneered the use of creative and visual methods for local communities to manage their own development. These approaches have inspired work at a larger scale, as in regional and global value chains and environmental issues. Methodological innovation in civil society, government, and the private sector has also inspired those working in ‘design thinking’ and ‘social innovation labs’. While these developments are promising, there are still many examples of missed opportunities. Poorly designed and poorly facilitated collaborative projects are common, the people involved do not always know what is needed to make them work well. We hope that this guide will help provide practical insights to make collaborative work inspiring, effective and fun.
1 INTRODUCTION

Are you working to connect businesses and NGOs to create better environmental and social standards? Or are you a government policy officer needing to work with the fisheries sector and local communities to create a sustainable management plan? Is your business partnering with farmer organisations, NGOs, and an impact investor to source responsibly from small-scale farmers? Perhaps your NGO is trying to work with government and businesses to create more opportunities for youth in rural areas?

Multi-stakeholder partnerships offer practical ways forward in these types of situations, and in many others. How to design, facilitate and manage these partnerships is what this book is all about.

In 2015 the global community will agree to a set of Sustainable Development Goals that address the big issues facing humanity for the coming decades. They will only be achieved through strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships, as the UN Secretary General himself recognises. It will be the collective efforts of partnerships everywhere that will make the difference. This guide is a contribution to that effort.
MSPs: collaborating to tackle the complexity of sustainable development
2 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

We can understand that the best way to address complex issues is for the different groups affected – the stakeholders – to work together in partnership. But what does this actually mean? Are there different types of partnership, do they have different purposes, what are their common characteristics? And what is a ‘stakeholder’? How does the process work? This section looks at how we can define multi-stakeholder partnerships or MSPs, how such partnerships work, and how we can judge whether an MSP is the best choice for our issue.
Boundary spanning

Global Action Network
Multi-actor platforms

Innovative Platform

Cross-sector partnership

Roundtable

Multi-stakeholder initiative

Social Learning

Knowledge co-creation

Stakeholder dialogues

Learning Alliance

Participatory planning

System innovation

Social Lab

Global Action Network

Interactive Policy Making

Cross-industry collaboration

Collective impact

Terms often used to describe multi-stakeholder partnerships
3 DESIGNING THE PROCESS
The key elements for developing an MSP

This section introduces a process model that you can use for designing and developing your MSP. The model outlines the main phases of an MSP and the key considerations for effective stakeholder collaboration. The model operates like a GPS: it will help you (and your partners) identify your position and the direction to take in the journey you are making with stakeholders. The success of your MSP will depend largely on your ability to design a suitable process that includes conceptualisation, planning, and continuous adjustment and redesign.
Designing the process

Understanding the context

Developing change strategies

An evolving and adaptive multi-stakeholder partnership process

Using participatory methods and tools
4 SEVEN PRINCIPLES THAT MAKE MSPS EFFECTIVE

We have formulated seven principles that will help you to make your MSP more effective. The principles are based on our experience as well as on interaction with academics and practitioners. Each principle has a theoretical underpinning and descriptions of practical application. For each principle, there are three or four perspectives – these are conceptual models and theoretical ideas that help to explain the principle and illustrate the practical implications.

The first principle is perhaps the most challenging to understand. But don’t be put off: the ideas of complexity and complex adaptive systems are important for understanding how groups respond to change, and the extent to which you can and can’t predict outcomes and plan for success. The basic concepts are introduced, but for a deeper understanding, there are many other resources available to draw on in this rapidly developing interdisciplinary field.
Seven principles that make MSFs effective

**PRINCIPLE 1**
Embrace systemic change
1. Assessing the complexity of a situation
2. Soft systems methodology
3. Adaptive management
4. Four quadrants of change

**PRINCIPLE 2**
Transform institutions
1. Supporting and obstructing institutions
2. Systems thinking
3. Framework for institutional analysis
4. Linking institutional change

**PRINCIPLE 3**
Work with power
1. Types of power
2. Rank
3. Expressions of power
4. Faces of power
5. Empowerment

**PRINCIPLE 4**
Deal with conflict
1. Causes of conflict
2. Continuum of conflict
3. Interest based negotiation

**PRINCIPLE 5**
Communicate effectively
1. Dialogue
2. Non-violent communication
3. Powerful questions and active listening
4. Cultural issues and communication

**PRINCIPLE 6**
Promote collaborative leadership
1. Six aspects of leadership
2. Belbin Team Roles
3. Balancing results and relationships

**PRINCIPLE 7**
Foster participatory learning
1. Experiential learning cycle
2. Learning styles
3. Single, double, triple loop learning
5 FROM DESIGN TO PRACTICE

How can multi-stakeholder partnerships be initiated and facilitated?

Now that you have thought about the process to use in your MSP, and the seven principles that will help it function well, how do you move towards actual practice? This section looks at three areas for you to consider as you move forward to starting the work of the MSP. It delves deeper into the scope of facilitation when different stakeholders come together: How can you help the MSP run smoothly and efficiently in practice? Where does facilitation start and where does it end? We then outline four human dimensions that are essential components of success. Finally, we look at the practical requirements for organising an MSP: what support structures will you need, how will you deal with funding issues, and how you should communicate with those outside the MSP.
Facilitator

Boundary spanning

Free actor

enabler

Bridging agent

Network weaver

Community organizer

Champion

Change agent

Learning accelerator

The ‘invisible’ hand

Interlocutor

(art of) hosting

Convenor

Workshop facilitation

Terms often used to describe a facilitator
6 CHOOSING TOOLS

Methods and tools are what we use to transform our understanding and design of the MSP into practice. They will play an essential role in shaping your MSP, helping individuals to become part of a cohesive and productive group, and releasing creativity and innovation. We have included this section on tools partly because the most frequent questions we are asked are, “Do you know a good tool for situation X?” or “Can you share your toolbox with me?” But when you think about tools, remember that the tools themselves are less important than the spirit and context in which they are used. In the following, we introduce some general ideas about the tools and methodologies, followed by summaries of 60 different tools as an overview of what’s available.
### Tools per stage:

#### CONNECTION
- 1. Introductions
- 2. Human Spectogram
- 3. Rich Picture
- 4. Semi-structured Interviews
- 5. Stakeholder Identification
- 6. Appreciative Story Telling
- 7. Questionnaires; Surveys
- 8. Problem Definition Worksheet
- 9. Ground Rules

#### SHARED LANGUAGE
- 10. Stakeholder Characteristics and Roles Matrix
- 11. NetMapping
- 12. Stakeholder Analysis
- 13. World Café
- 14. Problem Tree
- 15. Timeline
- 16. Force Field Analysis
- 17. In Context Immersions
- 18. SWOT Analysis
- 19. Delphi
- 20. Visual Reminders
- 21. Cynefin Framework
- 22. Friends and Strangers
- 23. Trendline
- 24. Four Quadrants of Change

#### DIVERGENCE
- 25. Adjust Group Size
- 26. Role Plays
- 27. Forms of Power
- 28. Six Thinking Hats
- 29. Multiple Perspectives
- 30. Power Ranking
- 31. Guided Fantasy
- 32. Five Colours of Change
- 33. Combining Ideas That Might Work Together

#### CO-CREATION
- 34. Tuckman
- 35. Belbin Team Roles
- 36. Scenario Planning
- 37. Conflict Styles
- 38. Partnering Agreements
- 39. Open Space
- 40. Document and Summarise
- 41. Visioning
- 42. Circle of Coherence

#### CONVERGENCE
- 43. Prototyping
- 44. Prioritising and Ranking
- 45. Comparing Proposals
- 46. Feedback from Stakeholders
- 47. Ritual Dissent
- 48. Card Clustering
- 49. Socratic Dialogue
- 50. A Change of Scene
- 51. Silence

#### COMMITMENT
- 52. Set Decision Rules
- 53. Make a Visual Theory of Change
- 54. Polls
- 55. Fish Bowl
- 56. Reflection
- 57. Synthesis
- 58. Option One-and-a-Half
- 59. Closing Circle
- 60. Evaluation
7 MSPS IN ACTION

How do MSPs work in practice? Do you need a strong and charismatic leader to ensure success? What happens when there is a large power imbalance between stakeholders? Or when enthusiasm wanes, and the whole approach seems to be one long challenge? How does it feel to be involved in situations of misunderstanding and conflict? What can you learn?
By their nature, MSPs are extremely varied and are driven by people from different sectors, different walks of life, and with different styles of leadership. MSPs can be initiated by governments, the private sector, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions, or simply ordinary citizens concerned about an issue. It helps to have a strong and persistent initiator, but MSPs thrive when the initiator can make their concern a shared concern and create a core group that leads collaboratively.

This section brings you some stories from people who have experienced the ups and downs of working with multiple stakeholders. Each of them is a respected leader in his or her own field, but they all come from very different working backgrounds and have experience of very different MSPs. You will find stories from a civil society leader, a business network leader, a diplomat, two directors of a producer organisation, and a scientist. Together they will give you a diverse picture of the practice of facilitating MSPs as seen from the perspectives of different sectors and parts of the world.
8 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This section contains some additional resources, both for rapid reference and to help you deepen your understanding of MSPs. It also provides more detail on the wide range of academic and practice-based knowledge that lies behind this guide and on the sources of our inspiration. The first part looks briefly at the theoretical concepts that underlie our practice of facilitating MSPs and points you toward the main researchers involved in their development. This is followed by a list of recommended texts on the main topics of this guide. Finally, we list a number of websites that have useful material for the design and facilitation of MSPs.
THE MSP GUIDE

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