

**Review of Collaborative Governance:
Factors crucial to the internal workings of the
collaborative process**

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1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, a new form of governance has emerged to replace adversarial and managerial modes of policy making and implementation. Collaborative governance, as it has come to be known, brings public and private stakeholders together in collective forums with public agencies to engage in consensus oriented decision-making. Ansell & Gash (2008)

In their paper on the theory and practice of collaborative governance, Ansell and Gash (2008) define collaborative governance as

“A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.” (p2)

The importance, they stress, is that such a forum is formally organised and meets regularly, is initiated by a public agency, includes non-state private and public participants who are directly involved in decision-making (rather than just consulted), works to achieve decisions by consensus and focuses collaboration on the development of public policy or management. Governance here, after the work of Stoker (2004)

“... refers to the rules and forms that guide collective decision-making ... governance is not about one individual making a decision but rather about groups of individuals or organisations or systems of organisations making decisions.” (p3)

While this is a more formal, precise and usable definition, Ansell and Gash, in an earlier working paper (2006) also refer to a two step definition of Takahashi and Smutny (2002) which provides a more tangible quality, where

“... the term ‘collaborative’ as also used by Gray (1985), is defined as “the pooling of appreciations and/or tangible resources ... by two or more stakeholders to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually” (Takahashi and Smutny, 2002:166).” And governance is described “... as the “purposive means of guiding and steering a society or community” consisting of “a particular set of organisational arrangements” (Takahashi and Smutny, 2002:169).” (p7)

There is, in these definitions, a sense of intention – of having to come together to solve issues for the wider community. As Zadek (2008) with more flourish and enthusiasm comments,

“... public-private partnerships, essentially collaborative initiatives between state and non-state, commercial and non-profit actors have been born out of their participants’ pragmatism ... *these initiatives have been founded on participants’ views of potential synergies in capacities in leveraging improved outcomes for all concerned.* This is quite unlike the grand ideological visions of earlier generations of institutional utopias such of nationalization and privatization. But this lack of any over-arching narrative to date should not fool us into missing the fact that lurking beneath the surface of this ad hoc collection of activities is the most exciting new venture along new accountability pathways for development. Indeed, *new forms of collaborative governance are likely to provide most radical shake-up of our understanding and practice of accountability in modern times.* (p6) (Italics added.)

Q. So what is special about these collaborative arrangements? Much could be said about what critical variables can influence whether this form of governance, that is, bringing public and

private stakeholders together in collective forums with public agencies will indeed foster collaboration. However, in this review work, we have chosen to consider the nature of factors crucial to the workings of the collaborative process itself. As Kaner (2006) reflects, "What does it take for people to contribute meaningfully to the success of the enterprise as a whole?" (p2)

As a research team, we had, when first examining this process, reflected on what indicators of collaborative governance existed? Was for instance, evidence of social capital an indicator that collaborative governance could be utilized and developed? Would low levels of trust amongst participants impact on the success or not of such a process? Could we, in identifying indicators, establish whether there was a potential to develop collaborative governance? What could we implement within the collaborative process that might help create change? Did conflict preside because we were not able to provide the appropriate institutional setting, or the leadership for collaborative arrangements? And, was it possible, that we would never achieve a collaborative process irrespective of what we did?

With these questions still in mind the review work was started. The following pages pull together promising ideas from several bodies of research – business management, public administration, political science, learning theory, social psychology, mediation and the facilitation of a more general culture of collaboration. This cross-disciplinary review is not exhaustive but is meant to highlight key aspects of ongoing research that could be relevant to the development of a unique New Zealand process of collaborative governance¹.

I am indebted to scholars whose extensive work in the last decade (and sometimes more) has informed the theory and practice of collaborative governance: Innes & Booher (2000, 2003, 2010), Gray (1989, 2004), Leach & Sabatier et al (2001, 2002, 2005), Ansell & Gash (2006, 2008), Page (2008) and many others. As Ansell and Gash (2008) point out, collaborative governance,

"... has bubbled up from many local experiments often in reaction to previous governance failures. Collaborative governance has emerged as a response to the failures of downstream implementation and to the high cost and politicization of regulation. It has developed as an alternative to the adversarialism of interest group pluralism and to the accountability failures of managerialism, especially as the authority of experts is challenged." (p2)

Of interest to note is that, in our sampling of research papers, there appears to be little quantitative work available in the field, most work having an ethnographic base, where the knowledge gained is a result of an extensive iterative process – a constant cycle of learning and relearning – of practical application, performance monitoring, reflection on practice, development of conceptual frameworks, followed by further planning and then further practice.

So why is this important to note? The key issue here, as we will see, is that the deliberations within the research community mirror the paradigm shift intrinsic to the collaborative governance approach – a shift from a 'top-down' culture of command and control to a learning culture that enables a truly participative and deliberative engagement with the wider community (Parker & O'Leary, 2006).

So what are the crucial factors to consider for people to meaningfully contribute to a successful collaborative governance process?

This review covers several themes that arise from common findings of individual authors. There is the lead into the collaborative process and the requirement for the process, once initiated, to

¹ Note that for many years collaborative initiatives have been developed within New Zealand and work on these case studies is to be considered within a further Ministry for Environment research contract.

have *legitimacy*. Then once the process is underway, there are issues of how to optimize the *development* of the collaborative process to ensure success. Within this context there is a need to consider the drivers of the process, the commitment to change and over-riding purpose, the commitment to flexible leadership and shared authority; the commitments to authentic dialogue and the development of a learning culture; and finally, the need to establish the achievement of 'common ground' – steps that link to the common purpose – to which all can aspire throughout the process of collaboration.

2 A COMMITMENT TO LEGITIMACY

2.1 A commitment to meaningful stakeholder inclusion

So who is to be involved in a collaborative process? Page (2008) in his review observes: "Some acute, long-running disputes may be settled more easily by inside groups of immediate stake holders (Suskind & Cruikshank, 1987), while (the more) nebulous chronic, "wicked" problems may become more tractable through wide-ranging debates among an array of insiders and outsiders (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Roberts 2004, p4).

As Schuman (2006) in his introduction to *Creating a Culture of Collaboration* writes, "All individuals and interest groups in all sectors of society have the right to meaningful participation in the decisions that affect them" (pxxviii), and certainly, many advocate that the legitimacy of the collaborative process depends on being inclusive of a broad spectrum of stakeholders all of whom are interested in the problem under consideration (Chrislip & Larson 1994; Innes 1996; Crosby & Bryson 2005; Gray 1989). Others though, think that the best way to go is by, "... a careful construction of the membership of a collaborative group to ensure that those with the most immediate stakes in the issues have central roles and influence on joint decisions (Suskind & Cruikshank, 1987, p4).

While discussion around the legitimacy of including or excluding certain stakeholders is bound to arise in many forums, attempts to exclude certain stakeholders can ultimately threaten the legitimacy of the process (See Gray, 1989 & Kaner, 2006) or lead directly to the failure of the collaboration (Reilly, 2001).

Whatever the situation, the results of the final deliberations of a collaborative forum will be brought into question if relevant parties do not believe they have been effectively represented. As Ansell and Gash (2006) remind us, only those who have the opportunity to participate in a collaborative process are likely to develop a commitment to the process (p14). It is not surprising, then, that many studies of collaboration emphasize the importance of outreach to key stakeholders even to those who could be potentially difficult.

Reviewing the matter, and reflecting on the work of Schattschneider (1960) and Fung (2006), Page (2008) reports: the range of people in collaborative processes matters, because who participates will determine what is included in agendas, what facts are sought, and what solutions are suggested and agreed upon. The success of collaborative decision-making depends on three factors: whether the participants are respected by the people affected by the decision, their expertise, and the group's authority to make decisions.

"The breadth of outreach matters of course, because the *scope of participation surrounding a problem* affects the power dynamics among participants ... the topics that make the agenda for discussion, the range of information, expertise and perspectives brought to bear on them, and the outcomes of debates.

In particular, the representation and preparation of collaborators affect their collective legitimacy and expertise to discuss and make decisions about the topics on their

agenda. The processes and outcomes of collaboration likely depend in large part on how well suited the collaborators' collective legitimacy and expertise are to their agenda and decision authority. When the match among these three factors is poor, the collaborators lack the legitimacy or capability to discuss and make decisions about key agenda items; when the match is good, agenda items and decision issues are framed appropriately for the representativeness and expertise of the participants." (pp.4-5).

Even with the best of intentions though, the situation can arise where the legitimacy of the process is brought into question because key groups do not feel they have been party to the process, or because, as part of the deliberations, those in the collaborative space realize that they need to involve a wider spectrum of people. For instance, a collaborative process that starts legitimately with key stakeholders, may be questioned when participants realize that the process must in fact include not only those with *interests* in the outcome but also those *affected by* the outcomes.

As researchers, we in the research team have contemplated whether it is in fact possible to have people represent future generations. While this might seem far-fetched there is no doubt that the results of the collaborative process, can as part of an iterative process, always be extended to 'new' stakeholders or concerned citizens to further the deliberative process. As Kaner (2006), reports,

"In creating a culture of collaboration there is no such thing as "OK, we're done." It's organic; it's continuous; it keeps developing and transforming. And that's really hard and taxing. And so much of it is brand new because it keeps unfolding." (p22)

2.2 A commitment to participate

While the appropriate inclusion of stakeholders is fundamental to the success of collaborative governance efforts, scholars of collaborative governance have recognized that groups will have different incentives to participate in collaborative processes, depending on their relative power in that forum. Gray (1989) argued that power differences among players influence their willingness to come to the table and that power might be required to encourage participation.

Parties that believe that their power is on the rise will not necessarily want to bind themselves to one particular collaborative avenue, they will want to shop around or at least keep their options open. A collaborative process that depends on the involvement of all stakeholders can be easily undermined. As Reilly (2001) points out: "When alternative avenues exist for resolution, it is theorized that a collaborative method of resolution is not optimal" (p71). Fung and Wright (2001) add that "...participants will be much more likely to engage in earnest deliberation when alternatives to it – such as strategic domination or exit from the process altogether – are made less attractive by roughly balanced power" (p24).

However, the problem of power imbalance can occur not only with the entrance and exits of participants from the collaborative space but also at a more fundamental level. Decisions about the inclusion of representative stakeholders from organised segments of the community can come at the expense of less organised yet affected others. Many interests may not have an organisational infrastructure that can represent them in a collaborative governance process. English (2000) argues that the more diffuse the affected stakeholders and the more long-term the problem horizon, the more difficult it will be to represent stakeholders in collaborative processes (cited in Ansell & Gash, 2008, p9).

2.3 The role of pre-existing conflict

The collaborative governance considered here is premised on the pre-existence of conflict and differences of interest, but the literature suggests that a pre-history of protracted conflict may lead to an intergroup antagonism that is difficult to overcome through collaborative processes (Lewicki *et al.* 2003). How stakeholders construe their own identities and construct the problems they face and the solutions that may address them – can all work to prevent collaboration (Gray, 2004).

On the devastating impact of inter-group perceptions, Campbell (2006) adds,

“While acrimonious debate has always been part of the experience of human community, we have, by and large, been able to sustain the debate and to eventually reach some resolution. When this does not happen in a community, the response ranges from distrust and antagonism to overt conflict. In many communities today we are seeing less and less real debate, even acrimonious debate, and more and more dismissal of people we oppose as people with whom we have nothing in common and with whom no compromise is possible.” (pp.41-2)

Fortunately, many cases of collaborative governance can begin at the point when stakeholders begin to recognize that their past antagonisms have caused more trouble than they are worth, and are in fact becoming harmful. Weber (2003) describes the origins of a local collaboration as following exhaustion and frustration from constant battling over the disposition of natural resources and land management approaches and the need to overcome this and find an alternative, more amicable method for reconciling differences (p59). And Reilly (2001), for example, describes the “balance of terror” that keeps participants at the bargaining table for fear of losing out if they are not involved. In many cases – like the three cases studied by Weber – collaborative forums are encouraged by a conflictual stalemate (Weber, 2003, pp.59-61).

3 A COMMITMENT TO CHANGE: fostering common interests

The motivation to overcome such a conflictual stalemate or solve the 'wicked' or intractable problems experienced by stakeholders is the driving force to collaborate. The sponsors or conveners of a collaborative project must identify and convey that there is a need for the project or that worthwhile value could result from pursuing it. One of the first tasks of a collaborative project might in fact be to examine this issue and attempt to achieve a consensus regarding the nature of the problem(s) faced. Participants will need to perceive that there are benefits in collaboration for them and/or their interest group (Bradbury *et al.* 2006) and certainly, Zadek and Radovich (2006) see a clear mission and identity and commitment from partners as a key performance indicator of collaborative governance arrangements.

As many embarking on collaborative processes will say, "There must be a better way." Anything is better than the costly conflictual stalemate experienced. But, what is the better way? And can all agree on what would be a better way?

3.1 The role of a super-ordinate goal(s)

As social psychologists have known since the post-WWII years, conflict can be overcome and collaboration achieved by the identification of a super-ordinate goal that has perceived benefit for all participants despite lower-order differences and/or conflicts among individual or subgroup goals (Sherif, 1966). The need for a super-ordinate goal, in the form, for instance, of a "common mission", "shared vision" and "clear and strategic direction" has also been substantiated by more recent reviews of collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008) and those working on the development of a collaborative culture (Wong, 2006 and Harris & Strauss, 2006). The latter have also suggested that the building of trust, central to the collaborative process, is a function of the perceived alignment of vision and the alignment of shared purpose must reflect the vision, mission, core values and strategic direction of the project and its participants.

3.2 The role of trust

Trust is a fundamental to virtually all social interactions. It refers to the level of confidence we have that the other person will act in ways that meets our expectations. As Ansell and Gash (2006) point out there is a strong indication from a large number of studies that collaboration is just as much about trust building as it is negotiation,

"... it is such a general "currency" for the entire collaborative process. Trust operates like a "generalized medium of exchange" that affects and is affected by nearly all the other variables."

As they found in looking back over their research, trust appeared to be so central to every other aspect of the collaborative process that it was almost easy to overlook,

"... trust was just beneath the surface of our previous discussion of key variables – pre-history of antagonisms, incentives to participate, power/resource imbalances, leadership, institutional design, shared ownership of the process, and openness to mutual gains. In hindsight, it is not particularly surprising that trust should be critical for collaborative governance – after all, it is a process that largely requires stakeholders to engage voluntarily in exploration of win-win opportunities." (p18)

At the very core, collaborative governance is a process in which sufficient trust in other stakeholders and commitment to the process has to generate ongoing pursuit of win-win policies. In comparison, in collaborative projects that have run in very low trust environments,

where there is a legacy of distrust as reported in Chile (Koljatic *et al.* 2006) or in Ireland, (Murray & Murtagh, 2006), there is a need for an active effort to make links where few natural ones exist. As Powell, *et.al.*(1996) argue, “a lack of trust between the parties, difficulties in relinquishing control, the complexity of the joint project, and differential ability to learn new skills” are all barriers to be surmounted in the collaborative process. (p117)

How trust can be fostered in such situations of high distrust and non co-operative behaviour has concerned Leach and Sabatier (2005) who have worked to understand questions like, “What circumstances predispose us to trust one another?” And, “What institutional arrangements can foster trust in protracted multi-party negotiations?” And “How can trust be fostered?” Their results have shown that the participants in a collaborative process are more likely to trust and find the outcomes of a collaborative process acceptable if they see the negotiation process itself as legitimate, fair, and transparent (Leach & Sabatier, 2005). These results are also supported by Fisher and Ury (1981) and Chrislip and Larson (1994).

3.3 The interplay of trust and social capital

The other issue relevant to answering questions on trust is that of social capital. As Campbell (2006) discusses, social capital refers to the connections among people – their social networks and the norms of reciprocity, and trustworthiness that arise from them. It is a stored value that individuals can accumulate in their networks and if it is “... to be maintained, people must continue to participate in their networks with the confidence that their participation will generate new social capital.” (p43)

Essentially, within the collaborative framework we would expect: communication → engagement + reciprocity → progress → create networks of trust + systems of confidence → new social capital → more communication.

However, when there is a decline in social capital there is no longer a sense that communication will be worthwhile, confidence declines and withdrawal ensues and trust evaporates. So as Campbell notes, bringing people together to talk about a contentious issue (as expected in a collaborative process) is not enough when the social capital is down – in fact ineffective dialogue can reduce, and even consume social capital and reinforce pluralistic social trust (trust within a group but not between) – people can leave such a meeting feeling that there is no value in that particular system and that they had better stick to trusting people like themselves. They become unwilling to participate again which leads to the social capital reducing further. When people experience a decline in social capital there is a concomitant decline in confidence, a decline in communication and further withdrawal. (p48)

The challenge is to reverse this trend!

However, as Ansell & Gash (2008) remind us, high trust is not a necessary pre-cursor to successful collaboration if other factors are evident – an over-riding purpose, shared leadership, dialogue, and learning can all contribute to progress. As discussed earlier, there can be a legacy of distrust between stakeholders, and what is important is that there is the facilitation to ensure that dialogue occurs to foster trust. What is important is that there is commitment not only to a common or super-ordinate goal but also commitment to the collaborative process.

4 A COMMITMENT TO FLEXIBLE LEADERSHIP AND SHARED AUTHORITY

Building on earlier work (Mandell, 1994) and that of the work of Agranoff and colleagues (Agranoff, 2003 and Agranoff & McGuire, 2003), Mandell & Keast (2009) write that, 'The relational power of collaborative networks, with its emphasis on trust, reciprocity and mutuality provides the mechanism to bring together previously dispersed and even competitive entities into a collective venture" (p163). But what is this mechanism?

In earlier work, the role of leadership in collaborative governance was conceived as helping stakeholders discover and articulate win-win solutions. The leader became a steward of the collaborative process itself. As Chrislip & Larson (1994) write:

"In successful collaborative initiatives, leadership is focused primarily on the success of the collective endeavor. Differences in power and authority among participants are almost ignored. What emerges is a pattern of behavior analogous to what others have called *transforming*, *servant*, or *facilitative* leadership. This kind of leadership is characterized by its focus on promoting and safeguarding the process (rather than on individual leaders taking decisive action)." (p125)

The idea of bringing together a diversity of interests, some diametrically opposed, and some with a history of rancour, suggests a potentially explosive situation. As Mandell & Keist (2009) go on to say – given that these collaborative relationships are likely to grow, concerns have been raised about the management and leadership of these processes to ensure the optimizing of outcomes... "This is especially important for public sector managers who are used to working in a top-down hierarchical manner." (p163)

But how is the process to be managed? Does the uniqueness of the collaborative governance arrangement demand a unique style? As Kaner (2006) points out, leadership is not necessarily the key to transformation.

"As Carolyn Estes (1996) puts it, "Everyone has a piece of the truth." A leader has a role to play, yes, and in that role, he or she can provide ... many important elements: vision, insight, expertise, focus, resources, and so on ... But being the formal leader in creating a culture of collaboration is not the same as being the all-seeing, all-knowing provider of the "right way" to make it work. It takes the village to raise the child. And isn't that the whole point of creating a collaborative culture to begin with?" (See Kaner, 2006, p3)

What we find is that in collaborative governance the traditional understanding of leadership does not apply. It is replaced instead with the more "...equal, horizontal relationships (*that*) are focused on delivering systems change" (See Mandell & Keist 2009, p163). (Italics added.)

In a collaborative process the participants are *interdependent* such that for the actions of one to be effective they must rely on the actions of another. There is an understanding that "...they cannot meet their interests working alone and that they share with others a common problem" (Innes & Booher, 2000, p7). This goes beyond just resource dependence, data needs, common clients or geographical issues, although these may be involved (Mandell, 1994, p107). The risks in collaborative networks are very high. Participants must be willing to develop new ways of thinking and behaving, form new types of relationships and be willing to make changes in existing systems of operation and service delivery.

The purpose then is not to develop strategies to solve problems per se but rather to achieve the *strategic synergies* between participants that will eventually lead to finding innovative solutions. In this way a collaborative network is not about accomplishing tasks but rather finding new ways

(by developing new systems and/or designing new institutional arrangements) to get tasks accomplished (Mandell & Keist 2009, p165-166). Taking on this new approach requires high levels of trust and that takes time and effort to develop. But people must be allowed the time to put effort into building relationships, changing behaviour and learning from each other – to mobilize and act together (Boorman & Woolcock, 2002; Keast *et al.* 2004). And as Freeman (1997) has pointed out, the use of deadlines may arbitrarily limit the scope of this work.

For Mandell & Keast (2009) *leaders are required as catalysts*, facilitating rather than directing, developing the interdependence, the new relationships, the new styles of thinking, and new ways of behaviour while working towards *systems changes* (p166). Their focus on leadership is as a dispersed process, "... leadership does not refer to one person but rather the process of getting all members to interact in new ways that tap into and leverage from their strengths ..." (p166) assisting the group to move forward so that the diversity of skills can be brought into the network. A shared leadership can evolve within the life cycle of the collaborative governance process. Leadership is a balancing act or an alliance between the more facilitative and nurturing functions as well as processes and the need to leverage relationships and drive for outcomes (p172), but emphasis is on the relational leadership ... that can inspire, nurture support ... build trust and share responsibilities.

But while there may be a number of influential participants, it is what is a result of this mode of collective decision-making that is perceived to be of fundamental importance – "... it is the ability to find and develop a pool of shared meaning through a process of creating 'a new collective value' (Innes & Booher, 1999, p15) ... it is a way of understanding and valuing the processes that allow for the development of the new gestalt. Or as Stivers (2009) has discussed, individuals are constantly changing as they immerse themselves in social interaction and they are sustained, in part, by the interplay of relationships – each individual with the many – the resulting community process constantly creating an evolving common purpose. (p1102)

In summary (drawn mainly from the work of Mandell & Keast, 2009, p166), the work on leadership would indicate that while there may be a 'formal' leader, leadership is seen as shared across collaborators; with leadership as a process catalyst being more enabling, creating the processes and space for collaboration and facilitating the common ground. The main tools in this process being trust building and fostering the engagement of participants.

As plausible as these findings sound, one wonders exactly how, as Page (2008) reflects, "... leaders can catalyze stakeholders, manage conflict, and sustain collective action on multiple fronts in a world rife with differences in preferences, information, and power" (p3). As Kaner (2006) writes,

"Ultimately you want a group that believes in values of full participation, mutual understanding, and shared responsibility, but you don't start with any of that." (p7)

Communication is the key.

5 A COMMITMENT TO AUTHENTIC FACE-TO-FACE DIALOGUE

Sharing knowledge is central to a collaborative undertaking, yet this can be a significant cultural change from the prevailing business and academic cultures which guard intellectual property, research findings and other information (Kaner, 2006).

As Page (2008) points out, "If participants in a multi-stake-holder process are to govern collaboratively, they must articulate their views on key issues, *listen* to one another's views, and formulate a joint approach to address the issues." (p5) (*Italics added*). Stakeholders need to be open minded to the possibilities of collaboration. As Schedler and Glastra (2001) explain,

"Interactive policy making is based on the reasonableness of players; they are expected to show restraint and self-discipline....The first assumption of interactive policy making is that the participants in the policy-making process are interested in each other's views and positions, and take these into account....The second principle of interactive policy making is that conflicts of interests between players in policy-making projects, including their communication professionals, can eventually be bridged in a reasonable negotiation process." (p341-342).

Whether all agree on all aspects of the joint approach is another matter; the point, says Page, is that they need to develop one, and in order to do this, they need to engage in direct exchanges regarding each other's interests and ideas. (See p.5.)

Innes and Booher (2003) argue that collaborative governance models must engage in "authentic dialogue" in which each stakeholder "legitimately represents the interests for which he or she claims to speak" (p38). In order to do this, stakeholders need to come to the table with their interests but be open-minded about their positions. They must be willing to "seek mutual gain solutions" (p38). And Page (2008) adds, when meetings focus on what is in people's interests rather than on what their opinions are, it is possible to reach agreements that are acceptable to most parties. When participants actively listen and learn about a range of alternatives, they are able to reach conclusions about what they can do together to meet their shared goals.

"When structured carefully to elicit and address participants' interests (as distinct from their positions), such exchanges can produce agreements that most or all participants view as satisfactory (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). When participants use reason and logic to persuade one another of the merits of alternative ideas, they can generate new understandings that help align their preferences about what is possible and desirable to accomplish together, and about how to achieve their joint aspirations (Cohen & Sabel, 1997; Innes & Booher, 1999). Put more succinctly, constructive deliberation about how to fulfil stakeholders' individual and collective interests can enable agreement on collaborative goals and strategies." (p5)

However, as Campbell (2006) reminds us,

"The fundamental issue in establishing civil dialogue – building the kind of social trust that engenders new shared values across existing conflicting memberships – is not the content of such dialogues; there is rarely any shortage of content issues requiring resolution. The issue is not about *what* but about the *how*. This is the challenge of effective process facilitation. The failure of civil dialogue is a failure of process. It is a failure to appreciate and understand the complexity of the dialogue process and the need to provide people with a process and a setting that move towards...social trust." (pp 48-49).

Building on the work of McCarthy (1997), Campbell adds, that for dialogue to be effective, there needs to be evidence of three dynamics – disclosure, transparency and effective process:

- (i) Disclosure – the level to which people feel they can reveal their intentions. In a high social capital community people can do this without fear of ridicule ... open about hopes and dreams.
- (ii) Transparency – people's willingness to make sure they have all the information they need to participate in a community effectively ... they're ready to share intentions and implications with the community and willing to have their assumptions tested/questioned/challenged.
- (iii) Effective process – including clearly established and agreed on methods, ground rules, and techniques that govern how people will interact.

For dialogue to be effective participants are required to enter conversation with an unbiased attitude, a willingness to suspend judgment, a commitment to listen to diverse perspectives (and to act or react as required) and an understanding that compromises may be necessary in order to achieve "win-win" outcomes.

However, one could be forgiven, when having the read the paragraphs above, for feeling still unsure about what this all means. Most of us are respectful, thoughtful and try to understand the others' viewpoint. So, what is new?

Fundamental to this process of being open-minded, suspending judgement, willing to consider 'win-win' solutions and engage in authentic dialogue is the ability to listen. This is different from just hearing what another has to say, waiting for a chance to talk, and sliding the conversation around to meet your own needs as soon as the opportunity presents itself! To this extent dialogue is required for effective deliberation and dialogue requires both the ability to listen and the ability to express one's own point of view constructively. A brief example may be of use:

Imagine a forum brought together to look at the management of freshwater quality. In the middle of the conversation we might hear A say to the Forum: 'We need to establish a national value system to guide our management strategy at a regional level!' B retorts though, 'I struggle to understand the relevance of what you are saying here ... at a regional level we need ...'

What's happened is that B has moved into 'discussion' mode asserting his own concerns. B has switched off A. If he had been tuned into dialogue he could have responded to A with: What do you see as the key advantages of going with a national level system? Or ... What is it about a national level system that you think would work for us ... Or ... so you really think values at a national level are the way to go? All of which would have A explaining more of his viewpoint.

What happens in this process of dialogue – of really searching for the viewpoint of another – is that the assumptions of their initial contributions to a conversation are allowed to come to the surface, allowing all participants to reflect more fully on another's argument. Thinking patterns are challenged and it becomes more difficult to hold onto stereotypes. If the listening does not occur and forum members just take the opportunity to talk of their own issues, no one listens deeply enough to any other person, and assumptions are not explored, which then makes it far more difficult to find a compromise, to negotiate and develop a win-win scenario.

So what are the results of such an authentic dialogue? Where advocacy of opinion or facts is balanced by openness to inquiry? As Innes and Booher (2003) have found in an examination of many cases of collaborative policy making in environmental and growth management, authentic dialogue can produce enhanced reciprocity, the development of new relationships and social

capital among people who would not normally or necessarily have much to do with one another, as well as a great deal of *learning* and tremendous creativity.

6 A COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Engagement and authentic dialogue begin the collaborative process but the creation and maintenance of a culture of collaboration requires a commitment to ongoing learning (Harris & Strauss, 2006; Silva Parker, 2006). As participants engage in authentic dialogue, they ask questions, they listen, they interact and learn about one another and the knowledge and information provided by other participants engages self-reflection and shifts thinking patterns as assumptions and theories are tested.

From a learning perspective, levels of participation and engagement in a collaborative process can be considered from an incremental learning perspective, or from a reframing learning perspective or lastly a transformative perspective. Referred to as single-, double- and triple-loop learning²: single loop learning refers to the skills, practices and actions required to '*do things right*'; while both double-loop and triple-loop learning take a 'higher order' or 'meta-perspective' with double-loop learning examining the assumptions and attitudes underlying the actions and behaviours of single-loop learning while triple-loop learning allows us to reflect on the basic values and norms that trigger our assumptions/attitudes and behaviours (see Dyball *et al.* 2007; Keen *et al.* 2005).

If we consider our example again of a forum considering management of water quality, then first loop learning (Are we doing things right?) would probably be reflected in carrying on with the same action strategies but just doing more of them ... like ensuring that the resource consent procedures were adequately addressing the issues and/or the district plan rules across the country were strengthened to ensure that water quality was assured. A shift in our thinking patterns to a more meta perspective (Are we doing the right things?) might have us looking at completely different ways of monitoring water quality. Another shift into third loop learning would have us reflecting on 'Why do we have a water quality problem? What is going on that stops us solving this problem?'

A well facilitated collaborative process can help participants shift into a transformative, or meta perspective. Every shift brings an 'a-ha' experience, another 'small win' (Weick, 1986). Shared understanding becomes then part of a collaborative learning process (Daniels & Walker, 2001) that facilitates deeper trust and commitment. What seasoned facilitators and counsellors can also tell us is that dialogue, and particularly, the ability to listen well, helps foster trust which in turn fosters further dialogue (Campbell, 2006 & Bradbury *et al.* 2006), each instance of being listened to effectively leading to a 'small win' or sense of success.

6.1 Belief in a collaborative approach

A commitment to a culture of learning also requires that all the participants in a collaborative project believe in collaboration, ie, that a group is more resourceful than an individual (Kaner, 2006). Without this there can be no meaningful commitment. As Doubleday (2008) discusses, change starts with people who have the capacity to think not only about alternative ways of working but also when they are able to imagine their successful implementation. (p239) The belief that participants have that they can achieve change influences both the individual and collective capacity of the group. As social learning theorist Bandura (1997) wrote: self-development isn't the only way for people to improve their lives. They can also make significant gains by working together to overcome institutional barriers. But people first need to believe they can make changes to institutional practices.

² Based on and developed from the work of Bateson (1973); Argyris & Shon (1978).

'People change their lives for the better not only through self-development but by acting together to alter adverse institutional practices. If the practices of social systems impede or undermine the personal development of some sectors of society, then a large part of the solution lies in changing the adverse practices of social systems through the *exercise of collective self-efficacy*. To shape their social future, *people must believe themselves capable of accomplishing significant social change ...* (p33)

Success develops confidence and builds on self-efficacy: dialogue → social learning → enabling the development of a common purpose → collaboration → success → collective self-efficacy → further dialogue.

7 A COMMITMENT TO IDENTIFYING 'COMMON GROUND'

7.1 The role of agenda framing

We have already mentioned that the way stakeholders to the collaborative process construct the problems they face and construe their own identities (from Gray, 2004) can impact on the collaborative process. Similarly, these perceptions, or framing of the agenda, can work to foster or detract from the collaborative process and the development of 'common ground'. For instance, a common theme encountered when trying to develop collaboration between scientists and the public is the 'deficit' model – the idea that if the public knew all the available science/research they would then be able to make the 'right' rational decisions. Agendas, in these cases can be constructed to address this deficit, irrespective of whether this framing provided an adequate understanding of the collaborative problem. Luckily, agendas can also be positively framed as Page (2008) reviews and discusses: Encouraging people to reconsider the perceptions or assumptions on which they are basing their policy design is crucial to collaboration (McGuire, 2002). Some leaders discount the validity of some ways of seeing an issue (Bachrach & Baratz, 1963), but other facilitators actively help participants to take a more open-minded approach to meeting goals and addressing issues in new ways, that achieve win-win solutions and are acceptable to all parties (Huxham & Vangen 2003; Bryson *et al.* 2006). Discussing an issue in a way that highlights the potential for outcomes of benefit to all parties is particularly helpful, and is a better way to promote co-operation than focusing on specific problems or projects. Discussing the work of Fisher & Ury (1981), Page mentions:

“Framing efforts that highlight stake holders' shared or overlapping interests are particularly valuable, since agreement and cooperation are easier to achieve when discussions explore participants' general interests and outcomes rather than their positions or program specifics”. (p.4)

In actual fact, what happens in this more positive account of framing is a process akin to developing double-loop and triple-loop learning (p13) where effective facilitation can achieve both a redefinition of problems to be tackled and consequently, the solutions to be considered and applied.

Note too that framing in this context is quite different from having a shared purpose or super-ordinate goal. Framing can allow for alternative conceptualizations that fosters a shared understanding. The super-ordinate goal is where the shared understanding can take the collaborative process. It is the outcome of an effective process.

Needless to say, in addition to framing the agenda and convening participants strategically, leaders of collaborative initiatives can promote legitimacy, fairness, and transparency through several measures that shape the dynamics among the participants. In particular, they can clarify the processes and procedures by which the participants exchange views, consider proposals, and make decisions. They can establish formal ground rules and cultivate norms to guide participants' behaviours and interactions (Dukes *et al.*, 2000; O'Leary & Bingham, 2007) – all of which promote authentic dialogue, a culture of learning and achievement of 'common ground'.

7.2 Engaged and incremental decision-making via consensus

A key issue for achieving this 'common ground' is how it is captured when it actually occurs. What we find is that participants can often frame or define problems in a way that overwhelms their ability to do anything about them. The issue is that complex and daunting problems need to be recast into smaller, less arousing problems that participants can identify as a series of controllable and meaningful opportunities that can be worked on to produce visible results.

Such 'small wins' are part of the consensus building process. While the process is well explained elsewhere (Donaldson, 1994) a key issue here is the art of recognising consensus. As Donaldson remarks, 'The most critical thing is to listen for closure and act upon it immediately. If this is not done, the arguments will become circuitous and consensus will be lost in the confusion ...' (p73). Facilitation is so important here – there needs to be an eye on all participants – an awareness particularly of the non-verbal communications – the more relaxed body postures – all the head nods in support of what has been said. This agreement needs to be immediately articulated, reflected back to the group for any residual concerns that can be worked through and the agreement then recorded.

7.3 The role of facilitation

The facilitatory nature of leadership has been referred to frequently in this paper and there is little doubt that the facilitation process is crucial to the development of authentic dialogue within a learning culture, the achievement of a shared 'common ground' and the consequent consensus decision-making.

In many cases of collaborative development the nature of facilitation is deemed to be so important that people are brought in to fulfill this role independently of any leadership function (Reilly, 2001; Kaner, 2006). Roger Swartz's (1994) definition is of use here,

"Group facilitation is a process in which a person who is acceptable to all members of the group, is substantively neutral, and has no decision-making authority intervenes to help a group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, in order to increase the group's effectiveness." (p4)

That is, the facilitator has no vested interest in the outcome – just in improving the process of how participants talk to one another, listen, interrupt, deal with conflict and make plans, etc. – the quality of the dialogue being crucial to the experienced success.

Much of the facilitator's work takes place off stage, but on stage s/he must preside and ensure that participants engage equitably and respectfully in the process. Their planning role involves determining the best methods and techniques, making sure that the process is easy to understand, clarifying and enforcing the steps for achieving agreement, and managing science and data proactively. They must also empower participants by making the process participant-friendly and ensuring that there is time for the consensus builder's political work. But, even so, facilitating negotiation can be difficult.

As Ansell & Gash (2006) have described, "... a key aspect of collaborative governance is that stakeholders must "own" the process. This implies that even if unassisted negotiation is not possible, the leadership role has to avoid subverting this ownership. Therefore, in describing three forms of "assisted negotiation," Susskind & Cruikshank (1987) suggest increasingly more interventionist mediation techniques to the extent that stakeholders are unable to directly collaborate. Facilitation is the least intrusive on the management prerogatives of stakeholders; a facilitators' role is to ensure the integrity of the consensus-building process itself. Mediation increases the role of the third party intervention in the substantive details of the negotiation where stakeholders are ineffective in exploring possible win-win gains. Finally, if stakeholders cannot reach a consensus with the help of mediation, the third party may craft a solution (non-binding arbitration)" (p13).

8 THE ROLE OF MODELLING

8.1 Conveners, leaders and facilitator must model collaborative skills

Conveners, leaders and facilitators must model a commitment to learning and adopting collaborative skills such as active listening, ensuring that all participants are listened to and treated fairly, identifying and testing assumptions, behaving and communicating authentically and patiently moving the group at a pace that ensures all are included (Kaner, 2006; Sander Wright, 2006).

As Page (2008) points out, carefully structured deliberation, in particular, may enable citizens, public officials, and other stakeholders to transcend their initial divergent preferences by working together to envision joint goals and then design and implement policies and programmes to achieve those goals. The impact of such iteration depends on the legacy created by the initial phases of collaboration and on the specific changes that leaders make in their tactics in subsequent phases. Two trends appeared in the iteration of collaborative processes tracked by Page:

1. In the early stages of a collaborative process, a convenor or facilitator can reflect on what is not working so well, and make changes to enhance the range of views heard around the table and the quality of the listening and consideration that follows. Intervening to improve representation and deliberation will enhance participants' opinions of the fairness and legitimacy of the process.
2. As the process moves from high-level strategy into planning actions to implement it, the meetings can become more difficult. Stakeholders' positions on what should happen can become more entrenched and less open to alternative options; so the initial agreed rules of how the meetings are to run may be overlooked or forgotten. "Regardless of the apparent successes of initial phases of collaboration, leaders need to craft tactics just as carefully in later phases of the process" (p18)

8.2 A note on participant behaviour

While there may be many models of participant behaviour, the findings of Hanson (2006) are indicative of the roles that may be usefully observed in a collaborative process. The research, based on the testimonials and insights of thirty five professionals from across the USA, who engaged in four collaborative processes convened to address high-conflict environmental issues, indicated that the visible actions at the meeting table are like the tip of an iceberg. Behind the scenes, strong influences were exerted, as people adopted a unique mix of assertiveness and cooperativeness to tackle the quest for 'win-win' solutions. Participants engaged actively in meetings as well as advocating for decisions made when back in their organisation or sphere of influence. Back-stage work also involved further meetings and negotiations with other participants, developing relationships and advocating for proposals all occurring between the official project meetings.

Among participants, four different styles of problem solving were observed – competing, avoiding, accommodating and collaborating – - but the research noted that some participants used different strategies at different times. For instance, within the collaborating group, a further four parallel styles were observed. These included:

- Boundary guards are competitive, highly assertive and minimally cooperative. They view the process as contract negotiation and strive to increase their influence and benefit while not giving up anything. They tend to be aware of the power bases within the group and to them collaboration means letting others have their way. However, they see

themselves as collaborative because they forego many adversarial tactics in order to participate.

- Team players adopt a “wait and see” approach that is minimally assertive and minimally cooperative. For them, the process is like a high-level committee meeting where decisions are made after all the information is presented. They tend to fulfill their on-stage obligations but not broker solutions, and are influenced by others who make a compelling case.
- Boundary spanners are accommodating, minimally assertive and highly cooperative. They tend to promote a search for the greatest common ground and do not represent a narrow interest. They attempt to build bridges across ideologies and other boundaries. They approach meetings as if they are think tanks, identifying and synthesising points and making cases for bridge-building solutions. They tend to focus on the front stage but will lobby back stage to help the common cause.
- Solution brokers advocate aggressively for their own interests but listen intently to find substantive agreements or innovative ways to achieve collaborative progress. They see the collaborative process as a legislative session in which any means can be used to influence and they work hard on- and off-stage for their own interests and to find middle ground for the collaborative cause. They are pragmatic, do not burn bridges and take a long-term view.

Note: There may also be similar subgroups within the other styles, but they were outside the scope of this study.

9 MEASURING SUCCESS OF A COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE PROCESS: process and outcome measures

Q. How do we decide whether a collaborative governance process has progressed or whether, at the end, it was successful?

To what degree is a process collaborative? Is it through what is achieved throughout the process and from the outset (ie, whether it is indeed a collaborative process) or is it measured by what was finally achieved relative to other modes of decision-making?

In determining whether the process is indeed collaborative, a number of the commitments to collaborative qualities discussed above could be assessed in relation to whether efforts have failed or succeeded to reach collaborative governance. We could argue that it would necessarily, but not exclusively, include questions like:

- 1) Have all interested/affected parties or stakeholders been directly involved in the decision-making process – sufficient to ensure the legitimacy of the process and its outcomes?
- 2) Have participants engaged in an authentic dialogue in their approach to decision-making?
- 3) Do participants experience and demonstrate 'ownership' of the collaborative process and has a super-ordinate goal been agreed?
- 4) Has their approach attempted to satisfy the interests of all affected parties as opposed to upholding stakeholder rights?
- 5) Are there any participants who still prefer alternative avenues for problem resolution, including the status quo arrangements?
- 6) Has leadership been shared in the development of creative solutions to seek 'common ground'?
- 7) Has there been enough time and resources to develop a collaborative learning culture?
- 8) Has new common ground been recognised and captured effectively and efficiently?
- 9) What style of facilitation has predominated – process facilitation, substantive mediation or third-party arbitration?
- 10) What signs exist of an enhanced/diminished culture of collaboration amongst participants?

However, as both Smith (1998) and Yaffee and Wondolleck (2003) have indicated, while *process* improvements are increasingly being seen as necessary precursors to environmental improvements, just measuring the process improvements is not enough. It is also important to assess whether the underlying problems are being solved, and whether both the social *and* ecological conditions have improved.

Smith, in particular, relies on final *outcome* measures to determine the extent to which processes are collaborative: 1) Was agreement achieved? 2) Were participants "satisfied with the fairness of the collaborative process, their participation in the process and the outcome of the process? 3) Was the agreement durable? 4) Did the collaborative process lead to good substantive agreement? 5) Did the collaborative process build the capacity of affected parties to solve problems and resolve disputes? 6) Did the "collaborative process facilitate the articulation of common values in a pluralistic society – common values that in turn make other problems easier to solve and reduce conflict?" (p29)

While Smith's outcome measures assess the social rather than the ecological conditions, ultimately, any evaluation of a collaborative governance approach will need to consider both process and outcome levels. But, as we outlined at the beginning of this review, the knowledge gained within the field of collaborative governance is a result of an extensive iterative process

across many practitioners and researchers – a constant cycle of learning and relearning – of practical application, performance monitoring, reflection on practice, development of conceptual frameworks, followed by further planning and then further practice.

What we have also argued here as part of this review, is that the collaborative process can include a commitment to the development of a learning process so that evaluation and monitoring can be an intrinsic part of the collaborative process. It is not necessarily the case that the success of the collaborative process is assessed by an external agent. Participants can develop their own indicators of success (after Ryan, 2004). They can engage in an iterative process of thinking → strategising → doing → reviewing → rethinking so that the collaborative process becomes self-monitoring and self-evaluating – one of 'learning the way forward'.

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