1

What Is Collaboration?

There are places that you can easily fall in love with. Aimlessly floating down the Lower Wisconsin River past sandy beaches, you find yourself gazing up at the thickly forested hillsides. Your trance is only interrupted when your fellow canoeists find another sandy beach to stop at for a swim. But you are not the only one. Each year about four hundred thousand people spend a day on the river swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, picnicking, and visiting attractions such as Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin school.[1] Located within a few hours' drive of Chicago, Minneapolis, Madison, and Milwaukee, the area is popular for recreation. People come there to camp, or to stay at hotels and resorts, and some of them build cabins and second homes. It is a place that could easily become loved to death.

On the opposite side of the globe, in a dramatically different climate, millions of tourists flock to Cairns, Australia, each year to enjoy the tropical climate, hotels and seafood, and of course, Great Barrier Reef. They come from Asia, the United States, and Europe, and even a short package tour of Australia will usually include Cairns on the itinerary. At some point during their visit, almost all of these tourists will get on a boat and head out through the Trinity Inlet to the reef. As you leave the harbor, the city of Cairns fades into the lush green tropical rain forest on the hills surrounding the inlet and the water turns a deep, dark blue. These trips require boats, harbors, and navigation channels. The tourists want hotels, restaurants, and shops, and an array of other recreation activities during their stay. All of this affects the ecology of the Trinity Inlet, including impacts to water quality, fish, and habitat. Like the Lower Wisconsin River valley, it is a place in danger of being loved to death.

As different as these two spots are, they have several things in common. They are both places where natural amenities are at risk of being harmed by human use. They are both places where local control is fiercely defended, and state or federal involvement is looked at with suspicion. And they are both places where collaboration has had a significant impact on recreation, natural resources management, and land use planning. I chose to start with these two areas because they highlight the

intersection of collaboration with politics and the public. They also illuminate the challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of translating consensus into results.

Collaboration involves a diverse set of autonomous stakeholders working to build consensus to produce results. The consensus-building process often does not produce complete agreement, but there are many examples where it spans ideology and deep-seated differences. The Lower Wisconsin and Trinity Inlet cases are not simply glowing accounts, however; they are also stories about the challenges and failures of translating consensus into an ongoing approach to delivering results. The important question posed in this book is not just how to build consensus but how the consensus achieved through collaboration can be translated into effective results. The issue I address is how to go "beyond consensus" in both a literal and figurative sense. Literally, this book concentrates on the factors for assessing collaboration, and helping groups produce agreements and create the products and networks necessary for implementation. Figuratively, the goal is to help shift the focus of research from consensus building to implementation.

The Cases

The story of the Lower Wisconsin River valley starts in the late 1980s, when the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) set up discussions concerning how the valley should be managed. Few people expected local efforts to succeed, because previous state and federal initiatives had already failed. The isolation of the hill and valley communities in the region supports strong feelings of independence and resistance to outside interference. In sum, the Lower Wisconsin River valley is an unlikely spot to expect collaboration to work. Yet recreation pressures were leading to user conflict and ecological damage, and the development of second homes and resorts was detracting from the valley's natural beauty. Several counties in the valley did not have any zoning laws, so initiatives to plan and manage the region were not met with open arms. State legislators from the area told DNR staff that any legislation to protect the valley would pass "over their dead bodies."[2]

Several years later, after months of deliberation by a twenty-six-member stakeholder group, thousands of mailed newsletters, and over four hundred hours of meetings, public forums, and open houses, the Wisconsin legislature passed the Lower Wisconsin Riverway Bill, sponsored by the same local legislators who vowed to oppose the initiative. This process, though, produced more than just legislation. It generated consensus on a plan for managing recreation along the river, agreement on the management of state lands in the valley, and a regional riverway board that administers performance standards to protect the scenic and ecological assets of the river valley. When the legislation passed, some of the counties in the valley still did

not have any zoning regulations, but the region had visual performance standards that regulated the color, visibility, and screening of structures.

The story of the Trinity Inlet begins at a similar time, with a similar history of contention. Like the Lower Wisconsin River valley, there had been no regional plan for the inlet, and decisions by developers, the cities, and state government were leading to the inlet's deterioration. In 1987, the state of Queensland, local governments, and the Port Authority initiated a planning process to address the management of the inlet, bringing together technical experts, a range of stakeholders, community members, and Aboriginal representatives. The public input was not nearly as extensive as in the Wisconsin case, but the stakeholders all agreed to a management plan. The Port Authority, local governments, and state government also contributed funds to create the Trinity Inlet Management Program (TIMP) and hire staff.

A coordinator employed by TIMP worked with the participating organizations to administer the plan, produce a shared database, coordinate data collection, and establish a joint review process for activities and developments affecting the inlet. For the review process, managers from state government, local government, and the Port Authority agreed to jointly assess usage proposals. They reviewed marina plans, housing developments, and an array of tourism development proposals such as parasailing, jet boat operations, and canoe trails. TIMP itself had no new authority. It relied on the joint management plan and the shared decision-making authority of the participants. Representatives from each organization examined the proposals, reviewed information, identified concerns, and came to a consensus on recommendations; each organization then issued its own formal response.

Just as crucial to this story, in 1997 this carefully crafted structure began to dissolve, and TIMP and the joint review process no longer exist. Participants cited a number of reasons for the dissolution, including personality conflicts, a perception by some that it was no longer necessary, and concerns about sharing decision-making power. In particular, participants noted resistance to agency loss of autonomy along with tensions from underlying political differences between prodevelopment and proenvironment interests. The final blow to this integrated structure ironically came from the new Queensland Integrated Planning Act, which greatly reduced the time allowed to review development proposals and made the joint review committee structure unworkable.

These cases illustrate the potential and difficulties of collaboration. For one, they demonstrate that building consensus is time-consuming and difficult, but it can happen even in the most contentious settings. They also underscore how collaboration is often necessary because the complexity of a problem does not permit simple solutions, and many problems cannot be solved by one organization. Moreover, they show that collaboration is not just about developing a strategy but also about

creating and sustaining arrangements to collaboratively implement it. The cases also emphasize that collaboration involves substantial transaction costs of time and money, and that such efforts are precarious given the need to share decision-making power. Finally, the cases illustrate the changing nature of many public policy and planning approaches today—changing because single-issue, narrowly focused approaches have addressed many of the more straightforward problems, and we are now left with the more difficult, contentious, and diffuse problems. These are the "wicked problems" (Rittel and Webber 1973) that collaboration frequently emerges to address.

Defining Collaboration

Collaboration is based on the concept that problems—whether defined by physical, political, socioeconomic, or other boundaries—need to be managed holistically. Over the years, these concepts have been captured by several different terms, including integrated environmental management, ecosystem management, place-based natural resources management, grassroots environmental management, watershed management, collaborative governance, and collaborative planning. I use the term collaboration in this book to refer to the collective set of ideas and principles encompassed by these other terms. Similarly, a wide variety of terms is used to refer to the groups that carry out collaboration, including stakeholder groups, consensus groups, councils, committees, and community-based collaboratives. Because I am interested in a range of collaborative enterprises, which includes groups operating at several different types of decision levels and scales, I have chosen to use the term collaborative to refer to these groups.

There are many different definitions of collaboration. Barbara Gray proposed one of the earliest and most succinct versions in her book *Collaborating*. She defined collaboration as a process through which "parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (Gray 1989, 5). The working definition that I have developed for this book focuses on both solutions and implementation:

Collaboration is an approach to solving complex problems in which a diverse group of autonomous stakeholders deliberates to build consensus and develop networks for translating consensus into results.

There are several other important terms encompassed in this definition. It is an *approach* to planning and public policy rather than just a process. People interact (or collaborate) all the time to share information or resolve differences, thereby constituting a more limited, onetime, or one-issue relationship. In the context of

complex planning and public policy questions, collaboration implies a long-term, ongoing relationship.

Collaboration involves *stakeholders*, because individuals and organizations with a high stake in the outcomes must spend time understanding the problems before they can agree. The stakeholders create the depth of a collaborative approach. The process is also *deliberative*, allowing everyone to fully explore and debate the issues. This deliberation should also include a role for the public, which has a stake in the outcomes too, even if its interest is not as clearly defined. This helps ensure that agreements among the stakeholders are mirrored in the broader community, providing the breadth that supports the agreement.

In addition, collaboration requires *consensus* among the stakeholders and the public. Consensus may be defined by decision rules ranging from complete agreement to a simple majority, but in most cases it means an agreement that everyone can live with. This consensus defines the common goals and objectives, and the stronger the consensus, the more likely the stakeholders will support implementation.

Finally, collaboration requires *networks,* because reaching consensus is the easy part. The hard part is translating the consensus into results. This requires ongoing entities to guide implementation, rather than merely written plans or agreements. It also necessitates appropriate networks to support implementation and adapt management responses. This does not mean that all consensus-based processes require networks, but this book focuses on settings where the conditions demand an ongoing adaptive approach.

How Is Collaboration Different?

Collaboration has become a ubiquitous term in planning and management circles. It seems like what we used to call two people talking in a room has suddenly become collaboration. While some of this reflects the increasing popularity of collaboration, it also illustrates the tendency for management terms to wash through the literature and professions. The result is that the word has become somewhat diluted, and is now used to describe a wide range of processes and approaches.

To help explain collaboration, I like to compare and contrast several terms, which I call the "seven Cs." As defined above, *collaboration* captures a specific ongoing approach to planning and management. Each of the other Cs may be encompassed in a collaboration effort.

Communication involves the sharing of information. It can be one-way (a lecture or brochure) or two-way (an email exchange or a conversation). One-way communication can be done in effective or ineffective ways, but informing people is a relatively easy process. Two-way communication is inherently more difficult

because it requires both parties to share information and listen. It is the core of any interactive process, and effective two-way communication is essential for collaboration.

Consultation is a formal process of communication with a community of people that may be conducted by governmental or nongovernmental organizations. Like communication, consultation can offer significant or little exchange of information. Furthermore, consultation can be carried out with significant or no effect on decision making. Presenting information to a room full of people is thus relatively easy, but it is much more difficult to design a process that allows those people to have meaningful and substantial input on an organization's decision. In collaboration, consultation can be important for stakeholder groups that need to obtain feedback from the broader public.

Conflict resolution describes a range of formal and informal processes for resolving the differences between two or more parties. Effective conflict resolution starts with effective communication, because the parties have to communicate and understand their differences before they can resolve them. Conflict resolution may simply be a negotiation, or it may involve more formal procedures like facilitation, mediation, and even arbitration. It is an integral part of collaboration, but it generally depicts a narrower process because it begins with a defined problem or conflict. This may constrain the type of approaches from the outset. In contrast, collaborative processes advance a shared vision, which begins with the stakeholders defining common goals and then resolves differences related to achieving those goals.

Consensus building refers to the series of steps through which individuals come together, share information, and reach a mutual agreement about problems, goals, and actions. Some people use consensus building interchangeably with collaboration, but I like to think of it as the planning phase of collaboration. Building consensus requires effective communication and conflict resolution, but it typically implies agreement through substantial or complete accord rather than simple majority rule. Consensus building produces agreements, although implementation often necessitates ongoing entities and networks to produce results.

Cooperation is defined as a process whereby participants work independently toward a common goal. The key term is independently. Cooperation can be an important implementation approach for a collaborative when the issues are well-known, the goals are clear, the setting is stable, and the implementation actions are not interdependent. Hence, cooperative approaches are frequently described as implementation through a plan or contract.

Coordination is defined as a process whereby participants work jointly toward a common end. A coordinated approach relies not only on a common goal but also on a process of functioning together that allows mutual adaptation and adjustment. Coordination is a crucial implementation approach for a collaborative group

when there is less clarity regarding issues and goals, more dynamic settings, and interdependent implementation actions. This ongoing, interactive role also means that coordinated approaches require people, entities, or networks to support their work.

In short, collaboration has become a ubiquitous term because it is an umbrella concept incorporating many of the Cs listed above. Communication, consultation, and conflict resolution are an ongoing part of a collaboration effort. Consensus building is a core concept in the process of developing collaborative agreements, and implementation of those agreements may be carried out through cooperative or coordinated approaches.

When Do Collaboratives Need to Be Ongoing?

As this summary suggests, there are many deliberative planning and management efforts, and not all collaborative processes need to be ongoing. In some cases documented in this book, participants convened, built consensus, and then developed a cooperative plan that detailed implementation tasks to be carried out independently by different organizations. Many collaborative efforts, however, face complex problems with unclear data, changing conditions, and unclear intervention strategies. This often means there is a need for ongoing arrangements during implementation to respond to new information, make adjustments, and manage adaptively.

Adaptive management refers to a process of learning by doing in which the decision makers combine management activities with monitoring and feedback loops to allow for adjustment as well as improve future management (Holling and United Nations Environment Programme 1978; Layzer 2008; Webster 2009). When these monitoring approaches and management responses cut across jurisdictions, an ongoing structure that allows participants to coordinate their responses is needed. Most of this book focuses on issues and problems requiring these kinds of ongoing adaptive approaches.

While adaptive management has been described as a rational and scientific process, it has also been criticized as a trial-and-error process in which politics and science are intertwined. Several researchers have also questioned whether ongoing adaptive management approaches are able to respond effectively. In D. G. Webster's study (2009, 19) of adaptive management for international fisheries, she notes, "States try a cheap option, find that it doesn't work, and are left even more dissatisfied than before; escalation continues until a true solution is found or the fishery collapses, whichever comes first." Similarly, Judith Layzer (2008) contends that collaborative and adaptive approaches often lead to a lowest common denominator approach, because participants cannot achieve consensus on the most challenging issues. She also links adaptive management with flexible or voluntary management, and argues that learning and adjustment usually does not occur because of personnel

turnover, resistance to changing established practices, and an unwillingness to address issues related to core value differences.

In her final assessment of adaptive approaches, Webster (2009, 32) is less pessimistic, asserting that national decision makers "have proven to be highly innovative, even within the constraints of international bargaining." She suggests that the institutional systems may continue to evolve and develop more nuanced frameworks that may help them to address a range of ongoing issues. Likewise, in John Scholz and Bruce Stiftel's assessment of complex water resources problems, they contend that the uncertainties of both the human and natural systems require fundamental changes in our approaches to governing. "Adaptive management, then, involves the evolution of new governance institutions capable of generating long-term, sustainable policy solutions to wicked problems through coordinated efforts involving previously independent systems of users, knowledge, authorities and organized interests" (Scholz and Stiftel 2005, 5).

In this book, I don't attempt to define the biophysical or socioeconomic conditions that may lead to the need for an ongoing and adaptive approach. When there is stability, clear objectives, and clear strategies to achieve those objectives, an adaptive approach may not be required. When there is uncertainty, changing conditions, newly emerging information, and even changing expectations, there will be a need to monitor and adjust activities based on feedback. By definition this requires an ongoing approach that can make these adjustments.

Why Has Collaboration Emerged?

There is a rapidly growing interest in collaboration across a range of fields. This interest stems from the shift from more single-issue, single-organization approaches to more holistic and cross-jurisdictional responses. In their article about integrated and collaborative efforts, Stephen Born and William Sonzogni (1995, 168) state that it is a "response to much of traditional natural resource management, which has been largely reactive, disjointed, and for narrow or limited purposes." This does not always mean giving up government roles or powers. Instead, it means sharing power to address the range of human, societal, and ecological needs, and the result can be more or less government roles.

This book draws much of its findings from research in the environmental and land use sector, but collaboration has emerged in many different fields. In the area of social services, for example, there is increasing interest and even mandates for collaboration among the governmental and nongovernmental sectors. Gray (1989) notes that reduced government spending for social problems coupled with increased private and nonprofit roles has led to increased collaboration to solve the more intractable social problems.

There are several reasons why collaboration has emerged and taken root in planning and management. First, some of the problems being addressed through collaboration are diffuse problems that have not been adequately addressed through traditional approaches. Water quality management, for example, has traditionally focused on the control of point source pollution. Yet today, the dominant source of pollution in many watersheds is runoff from urban and rural areas (nonpoint source pollution). This requires action and management—some of it voluntary—from a wide range of individuals and institutions, such as farmers, urban landowners, and cities.

Second, we have come to understand more about natural and human systems along with how they function, which means that we are more aware of interconnections. For example, we understand that water quality is linked to the management of land, wetlands, and floodplains. As water pollution control has shifted to nonpoint sources, water quality has increasingly involved the coordination of policies, economic incentives, and voluntary conservation programs to protect and enhance these natural amenities.

Third, the distrust of government in urban and particularly rural areas has generated conflict around planning and management efforts. Community interaction often comes late in decision processes, which limits the opportunity for influence and increases public frustration. Lack of communication also leads to misinformation among both community members and government staff, leading to greater community mistrust. Collaborative processes provide opportunities for people to have more decision-making involvement and in some cases a direct role in management activities.

Fourth, many problems are not short-lived issues resolved through a single conflict resolution process but instead ongoing ones requiring adaptation and adjustment. Issues confronting water quality do not go away; they demand continual attention, adjustment, and problem solving. As a result, problem solving is not just a change in policy but rather an adaptive management approach in which key decision makers receive monitoring feedback and make adjustments.

Fifth, there is an increasing demand for integrated solutions. Many traditional approaches to planning and management are single-issue oriented. When community-based watershed councils get started, they often find that there are many efforts to address individual topics, but few to integrate them. One agency deals with water quality, another with water quantity, and another with wetlands; local governments address land use, and a myriad of state, regional, and local entities deal with transportation. None of these participants consider how these issues interrelate on a watershed basis.

Finally, there is greater competition for land, resources, and the use of them. National forests in the United States, for instance, were historically viewed as areas

of resource extraction. Yet the increasing use of these lands for recreation and the increased recognition of their ecological value has made the management of these lands much more complex. The problem is compounded by the relationship with neighboring public and private landowners, which in many areas is becoming increasingly difficult with more rural residents.

While the term collaboration may change over time, the underlying forces leading to collaboration will continue. In fact, with increasing population pressures, more difficult global environmental challenges, and more understanding of social, economic, and ecological interconnections, the need for some type of holistic and interconnected approach will only increase.

Where Is Collaboration Being Applied?

Collaboration is being advocated in many countries throughout the world, and much of it has emerged from applied learning that has preceded detailed scholarship. In the United States, state agencies and regional bodies began undertaking collaborative efforts in the 1990s to manage watersheds and forest systems as well as plan for regional growth (Clark et al. 1991; Innes et al. 1994; River Federation 1994; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1993). In particular, there has been a rapid increase in locally based collaborative groups in the United States, many of which are focused on watershed efforts. A study of watershed management organizations identified 600 nationwide (Clark, Burkardt, and King 2005). A study by Douglas Kenney and his colleagues (2000) identified 346 watershed partnerships west of the Mississippi, and William Leach, Neil Pelkey, and Paul Sabatier (2002) identified 150 watershed partnerships in California alone.

In public administration and public policy, the idea of collaborative and networked governance has emerged in response to complex cross-boundary issues and problems (Ansell and Gash 2007; Dukes 1996; May et al. 1996; Agranoff 1990; Mandell 1999, 2001). For example, David Chrislip and Carl Larson (1994) conducted detailed research on collaborative efforts involving local governments in six settings, and then tested some of the hypotheses from this work on another forty-six cases.

Collaborative approaches are also becoming increasingly common in the field of land use planning, particularly for regional and metropolitan scale issues (Helling 1998; McCann 2001; Lund et al. 2007; Margerum 2002b, 2005). A quick online search revealed over fifty "visioning" processes to address land use, transportation, and economic development at a regional scale. At the metropolitan scale, there are also many collaborative efforts around issues like social services, drug and alcohol treatment, and criminal justice (Darlington, Feeney, and Rixon 2005; Gray 1985; Colby and Murrell 1998; Marans and Schaefer 1998).

Australia has also been a hotbed of collaborative activity at several scales and levels. Many collaborative efforts were first spawned by the Community Landcare Program, which is a government-sponsored effort to encourage groups of landowners to come together and work with government to address soil and water conservation issues. A study in 1996 of these groups estimated that there were over 4,000 groups and 120,000 volunteer members (Curtis and Lockwood 2000). These efforts led states such as New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and Western Australia to develop policies or legislation for collaborative watershed (or catchment) groups (AACM and Centre for Water Policy Research 1995; Burton 1992; Mitchell and Hollick 1993). More recently, there was a significant new infusion of federal funding and program guidelines, resulting in the amalgamation of these groups into larger natural resources management organizations (Robins and Dovers 2007a; National Audit Office 2008).

Many other countries have also applied collaborative approaches. In Canada, provincial governments have initiated integrated watershed and basin management efforts (Dodge and Biette 1992; Shrubsole 1990). The United Kingdom, Japan, and other countries have seen new collaborative initiatives too—many focused around watersheds (Barrett 1995; Shrubsole 1990). Jeroen Warner's (2007) edited volume profiles collaboration efforts from countries such as Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, South Africa, the Mekong region, and Uzbekistan and highlights their potential for change as well as their likelihood of failure when confronting fundamental social, economic, and political barriers. Finally, in Europe there has been increasing attention focused on collaborative approaches to solving environmental problems, especially around water resources issues. Some of the early attempts concentrated on large-scale systems such as the Danube River basin and the Mediterranean Action Plan, but more recently this has been bolstered by efforts undertaken by the EU Water Initiative (Lindemann 2008; Mostert et al. 2007; Haas 1989). While European approaches have traditionally been more top-down, the increasing role of the European Union, the inclusion of new eastern European countries into the union, and the increased attention on diffuse pollution has all led to a greater emphasis on collaborative responses (Mostert et al. 2007; Pahl-Wostl 2002, 2006; Warner 2007).

In summary, collaboration is being widely applied throughout the world—often ahead of the theories that fully explain it. Practitioners frequently learn by doing, and thus one of the missions of applied fields like planning and public policy is to study practice, critique it, and develop theories that guide future practice.

What Are Results?

This book explores the translation of agreement into results, but what do I mean by results? There is a variety of approaches to measuring results, and chapter 10

explains the range of indicators and measures that can be used in evaluating collaboratives. Some of these factors have been used in the cases that I describe, such as input measures that assess the quality of information applied to decision making. Some of these indicators are also incorporated in the assessment factors listed throughout this book. For example, several of the factors discussed in chapters 3 and 4 are measures of process quality. When most people think of results, however, they think of concrete changes that address problems and issues. These can be described as outputs, performance indicators (or intermediate outcomes), and final outcomes (or impact measures).

Outputs are the direct products of the planning process, such as plans, policies, and regulations. In metropolitan Denver, for example, producing a regional vision plan for a seven-hundred-square-mile region supported by thirty-seven of thirty-nine signatory local governments was a significant result. A similar regional plan for South East Queensland was one of the first plans for an area that had been growing rapidly for ten years.

Performance indicators are the intermediate results of a collaborative process. These results might be changes in knowledge, attitudes, and awareness. For instance, planners and elected officials noted that the SEQ 2001 plan encouraged people to think about the region for the first time and provided concepts that began appearing in local government plans. These may also mean more concrete intermediate results. The South East Queensland region began recording the number of new infill or redevelopment proposals as an intermediate indicator of population and density targets. Finally, voluntary intervention programs may document the number of participants or changes in program participation, such as the number of people attending rural land management workshops.

Outcome measures (or impact measures) are the actual changes in social, economic, and environmental trends. They are often the results that generate the most interest, and their contrast with interim outcomes highlights the difference of each. Thus, the intermediate result of infill development proposals is an interim measure of the final outcome of increasing overall density, increasing utilization of public transit, or reducing urban expansion into outlying areas (or a combination of all three). Participation in a workshop is also an interim measure of ecosystem restoration, but the outcome measure is the effect on habitat and biodiversity.

When many people think of results, they think of final outcome measures. Are there more fish in the stream? Are we controlling urban sprawl? Is the population getting healthier? The problem is that these results are notoriously hard to measure. It often requires lots of data over a long period of time and with a sufficient intensity of intervention for a definitive result to be observed. For example, it could take years of intensive streambank restoration efforts to improve the ecological condition of a watershed, and years of data collection to flatten out the effects of seasonal

and climatic variation. Even then, these restoration attempts may be eclipsed by changes in water use, upstream urbanization, agricultural practices, or the introduction of exotic species.

For these reasons, it is important to think of a range of approaches to evaluating collaboration. Chapter 10 reviews some of the indicators for measuring outputs, intermediate outputs, and final outputs. I also review indicators for assessing collaborative process and program logic. Some of these indicators are identified throughout this book as well, and the goal of all this discussion is to provide approaches to assessing collaboratives at varying points to improve their ability to achieve results.

When Do Collaboratives Fail?

This book starts with the assumption that collaboratives can and sometimes will fail. For example, in Eugene and Springfield, Oregon, a planning effort called Region 2050 collapsed because city leaders and competing factions could not agree on regional objectives and strategies. In both Australia and Oregon, some watershed-based groups have disappeared. Some lost key leaders, some lacked a strong vision, and others could not gain enough momentum to generate long-range commitments from participants.

More important, collaboratives may survive but fall short of expectations, achieve few results, or constrain other responses from being undertaken. In Australia's Murray Darling River Basin, a federal-state collaborative management effort operated for over fifteen years to address water allocation, water quality, and land management. Yet its failure to resolve competing demands for water between the states ultimately led to the demise of the collaborative, which was replaced by a new federal authority with substantial powers.

Did the collaborative efforts lay the groundwork for the new authority or delay its introduction by over a decade? No one can answer this question, or even be sure that the new basin authority will be any more effective. We may also have a hard time defining failure. We can identify the measures for assessing collaboratives at all stages of the process, though, to allow them to self-correct and be evaluated. Therefore, this book is based on the assumption that there is a range of ways we can assess collaboratives to improve their performance or hasten their demise.

Overview of This Book

Beyond Consensus is divided into four sections: an introduction to collaboration, the consensus-building process, approaches to moving beyond consensus, and the implications for practice. Part I includes this chapter, followed by typologies in

chapter 2 that delineate collaborative efforts and networks to support implementation. These typologies are used throughout the book to explain how collaboration—and particularly implementation—differs among groups. The typology of networks is discussed below. The typology of collaboratives places them along a spectrum, which is demarcated by three archetypes: action collaboratives, organizational collaboratives, and policy collaboratives.

Action collaboratives are community-based groups that focus their collaboration efforts on direct action (for example, watershed restoration, ecosystem enhancement, and on-the-ground activities). Organizational collaboratives are groups that concentrate on the programs, priorities, and rules of management organizations (government, private, and nonprofit), including collaborative efforts sponsored by government agencies (for instance, U.S. Forest Service management plans). In turn, these organizations carry out activities and jointly produce action on the ground. Policy collaboratives are groups that focus their efforts on building consensus on policies (legislation, programs, and administrative rules). These policies ultimately affect organizations and the activities that they deliver on the ground through a range of approaches.

While these are portrayed as distinct categories of collaboratives, they are really only archetypes. In practice, it is not unusual for collaboratives to span levels, and in chapter 2 I discuss several of these examples. I also describe examples in which lower-level collaboratives may be nested within higher-level ones. This does not make the typology any less relevant; it does mean that some approaches are complex.

Part II examines the process of building consensus (see figure 1.1), because the process of implementation cannot be separated from that of consensus building. Many of these early steps have long-term effects on a group's ability to produce results. Chapter 3 reviews the process of convening collaboratives, chapter 4 looks at stakeholder deliberations during consensus building and their relationship to public involvement, and chapter 5 explores the products from consensus-building efforts.

Part III focuses on the implementation of collaboration, which often means translating agreements, plans, or strategies into action. Chapter 6 centers on the collaborative itself as an ongoing entity and the factors that determine whether they are sustained over time. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 build on the typology of implementation approaches introduced in chapter 2. Specifically, these chapters describe different networks used by collaboratives to translate products into results. This includes the social networks that provide important interpersonal pathways for information exchange and influence, interorganizational networks that allow governmental and nongovernmental organizations to coordinate their activities, and political networks that allow political actors to develop an integrated approach to

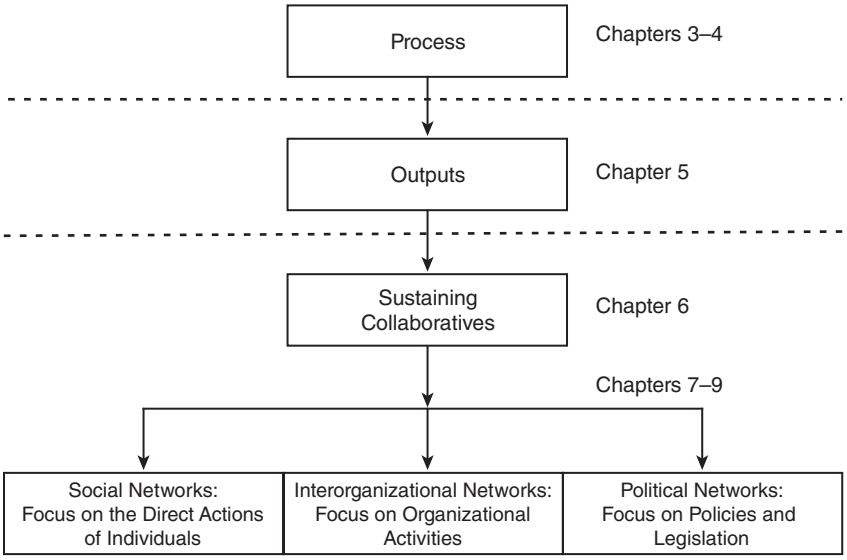

Figure 1.1
Overview of the book

policy implementation. Any given collaborative—regardless of where it is on the action-organizational-policy spectrum—may utilize one or more of these networks. Nevertheless, some collaboratives are better positioned than others to utilize certain networks.

Part IV examines how these different elements are translated into practice and prospects for the future. In particular, chapter 10 highlights the different forms and pathways that collaborative efforts might take, and the future opportunities and challenges for the array of people who influence collaborative practice. Chapter 11 reviews some of the trends facing collaboratives along with the communities, governments, and practitioners that support them.

Goals of This Book

My aim here is to improve collaborative efforts and make them more effective in translating their work into success on the ground. To do this, my book aspires to contribute two things. First, it strives to provide a better theoretical basis for assessing and explaining collaboratives as well as their ability to achieve results. Effective collaboration, as mentioned earlier, is not just about producing consensus but also about producing results from consensus. I believe that the typologies in chapter 2 underscore crucial differences between collaborative efforts, thereby helping direct

researchers and practitioners to the theories and conceptual models that will be most useful for advancing their endeavors.

The typologies are not predictive models. Yet they better explain the variety of efforts and some of the reasons for their differences. Are these typologies perfect? Of course not; collaboration is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. But hopefully my contributions will improve the research and evaluation of collaboration, and spark alternations, amendments, or new typologies.

Second, my goal is to provide a set of concrete indicators for researchers and practitioners to assess collaboratives. Thus, rather than just talking generally about how collaborative efforts are convened, I have attempted to identify the specific factors that appear to define when they are effective. These factors are listed in chapters 3–9 and summarized in chapter 10. Where possible, these factors have been linked to specific methodologies and measures that can be used by researchers and practitioners. These indicators of effectiveness are also a work in progress. They draw on a diverse range of approaches and disciplines. I have applied some of these, but some are derived from other theories and researchers. Some are specific, others are vague, and still others may require entirely new methodologies. I don't view this as being the end of the discussion but instead hopefully the start of new deliberations about translating consensus into results.