AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Stuty Maskey for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy presented on February 12, 2020.

Title: Collaboration Challenges: Stakeholder Perceptions of Managing a National Forestry Program. A Case Study of the Multi Stakeholder Forestry Program in Nepal

Abstract approved: _____

Denise H. Lach

Increasing calls from stakeholders for a greater role in public decision making has led to the rapid world-wide adoption of multi stakeholder collaboration for policymaking. In line with this emerging trend the Government of Nepal with support from its long-time development partners and bi-lateral donors initiated a policy level experiment in January 2012. A new forestry program, the Multi Stakeholder Forestry Program (MSFP) was designed to be steered by multiple stakeholders from planning to the implementation stage. This was by far the most ambitious forestry program in the country with a financial commitment of USD 150 million for ten years. The overarching aim of the program was donor-aid harmonization, institutionalization of multiple stakeholder collaboration in

decision-making processes, and governance reform in the forest sector. In 2016, only four years after its launch, the MSFP terminated early.

What explains this early termination? Through analysis of the stakeholders' perceptions about the factors that enabled or constrained the collaborative processes in the MSFP, this study provides insights into the issues in policy-level collaborations specific to the context in developing countries where international aid plays an important role in shaping country priorities and processes. The Integrated Framework for Collaborative Governance is applied to understand the stakeholder perceptions related to collaboration challenges at the program level. And the Framework of Socio-Technical Imaginaries is applied to understand challenges associated with the broader contextual and/or system level factors.

The findings of the study indicate that the straightforward explanation for the MSFP's early termination was the failure to meet the benchmark set for the successful completion of the first phase. This was the creation of a new multi stakeholder national forest entity to manage the program in the second phase. While a majority of stakeholders viewed the lack of Nepal government's leadership and ownership to form the entity as the prime constraint in the program, deeper investigation provides insights

into a myriad of challenges that contributed to the program's collapse. This included struggles for power and authority between the powerful actors, disparity in stakeholder capacities to collaborate, inability of the program leadership to generate political support, and the lack of adaptive capacity of the program management to respond to the changing socio-political environment.

Analysis of the study findings contribute to the scholarly debates on the normative positioning of development as a technical matter and suggests reassessing technical solutions such as creating new institutions to solve development problems. Further, the study draws attention on the time investment needed for collaborative processes especially in complex programs such as the MSFP that was experimenting with new approaches in a fluid political context. This case study recommends acknowledging the centrality of politics in development processes, and further highlights the need for adaptive program management that is responsive to the evolving socio-political context.

Collaboration Challenges: Stakeholder Perceptions of Managing a National Forestry Program. A Case Study of the Multi Stakeholder Forestry Program in Nepal

by
Stuty Maskey

A DISSERTATION

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Presented February 12, 2020
Commencement June 2020

Doctor of Philosophy dissertation of Stuty Maskey presented on February 12, 2020

APPROVED:

_____

Major Professor, representing Public Policy

_____

Director of the School of Public Policy

_____

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

_____

Stuty Maskey, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my advisor Dr. Denise Lach. Thank you for your advice and guidance not only for this dissertation but throughout my time at OSU. I couldn't have asked for a better mentor.

Many thanks to my committee members Dr. Brent Steel, Dr. Edward Weber, and Dr. Reem Hajjar for your insightful comments and encouragement. And to Dr. Marie Harvey for your support.

This research would not have been possible without the stakeholders in Nepal who generously shared their time and thoughts with me. I remain grateful.

My friends and colleagues in the School of Public Policy for sharing your ideas, knowledge, and for making this journey a joyful learning experience.

We Nepali people rarely say thank you to family because we think they know it. So, here is my chance. A big thank you to my family. My parents, sister, and brother for your undying faith in me. My family in Minnesota for your love and affection. To my baby Anya for bringing so much joy in my life. And most of all to Chris for your endless love and support to pursue my dreams.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother for always being there for me. And to the memories of my father. *Buwa*, you will always be in my heart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

The forestry sector in Nepal has long been at the forefront of participatory resource management with its globally acclaimed community-forestry program (Agrawal & Ostrom, 2001). Practiced mostly along the mid hills of the country, community forestry is considered a hugely successful program in reversing trends in deforestation, degradation, and improving access of forest products, livelihood condition, and overall landscape restoration (Carter, Pokharel, & Parajuli, 2011; Hajjar and Oldekop, 2018). Scholars argue that this was a result of two concurrent developments. The first was an increasing realization in the 1970s that the nationalization of forests between 1957-1970 had been unsuccessful in protecting and managing forests mainly because of the lack of support from the local people who felt disenfranchised and disengaged from resource governance practices (Hobley & Malla, 1996). And the second was the growing international discourse in the late 1970s that associated the impact of the degraded forest conditions in the Himalayas with the livelihoods of millions of people downstream in the Indian subcontinent (Eckholm, 1976). Following this, bi-lateral and multilateral donors prioritized environmental conservation in their development aid to Nepal while favoring

the decentralized model that was gaining prominence in the foreign-aid discourse around that time (Cameron, 1998). This was reflected in progressive legal and administrative provisions adopted in Nepal's forestry sector that enabled local control over resource management. The defining moment of establishing community rights over the national forests was the Forest Act of 1993 that recognized the rights of communities to organize as self-governed autonomous user-groups that could legally protect, manage, develop, and utilize delineated forest areas as community forestry efforts (Ojha, Timsina, & Khanal, 2007).

Another key development was increasing opportunities for non-state actors to participate in forest governance. In Nepal, this period during the 1990s was characterized by growing demands for democratic processes owing to the transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. Democratic processes diffused into all spheres of Nepali society. In forestry, this environment provided fertile ground for the emergence of organized civil society groups around forest resources such as the Federation of Community Forestry User Groups (FECOFUN). The emergence of these non-state actors was instrumental in revising the governing relations in practice (Ojha, 2006) and, arguably, in shifting the locus

of power and control from the state to more local governance, albeit at a slow rate (Luintel, 2006).

Nepal's forestry sector operates in a complex environment with many stakeholders that include but is not limited to the formal bureaucracy, international development agencies, local forest user groups, for-profit businesses, non-profits, professional associations, federations of user groups, and the private sector. Environmental scholars have argued that resource governance serves as a key site where struggles for authority, legitimacy, rights, and recognition are contested and manifested (Gotame & Timsina, 2014; Nightingale, 2017; Ojha, 2006). The forestry sector in Nepal serves as one such site that has evolved with the changing state-society relations characterized by struggles between techno-bureaucratic control versus community rights for resources, interests of the international development partners, and ongoing socio-political struggles that have influenced the ambitions and interests of Nepali citizens.

1.2   The Multi Stakeholder Forestry Program – An Overview

Nepal's forestry sector with its vibrant state and non-state actors has witnessed increasing calls for wider stakeholder engagement in decision making processes. This is

also highly influenced by the emerging global agenda of multi stakeholder collaboration for effective resource governance. In response to this growing demand for stakeholder collaboration, in 2011 three bi-lateral donors and long-time development partners in Nepal's forestry, the Governments of Finland, Switzerland, and the UK, came together to assist the Government of Nepal (GoN) in establishing a new forestry program called the Multi Stakeholder Forestry Program (MSFP). This program was by far the most ambitious forestry initiative in the country with a donor commitment of USD 150 million for 10 years. The program aimed to bring an estimated 1.7 million people out of poverty by working with existing and new forestry groups and by creating an additional 80,000 jobs (MSFP, 2012b). The program envisaged a multi stakeholder steering committee (MSSC) that would be led by the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MFSC) with representatives from government line ministries, civil society, and the three donors. Besides promoting community-based forestry, the program planned to engage in new and emerging areas including private sector promotion for job creation and tackling climate change through adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

1.2.1. MSFP Designed to succeed

Right from its conceptualization, the MSFP seemed to be well aligned with the emerging agendas of international development as guided by the millennium development goals

(MDGs) (succeeded by sustainable development goals in 2015) and the aid dissemination modalities under the 2005 Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness.

This is reflected in most aspects of the program's design, outputs, outcomes, and implementation procedures. First, the program document highlights its aim to contribute to the national goals of poverty reduction by bringing an estimated 1.7 million people out of poverty through forestry intervention contributing directly to MDGs 1 and 7 (MSFP, 2012a). Second, in line with the European Commission Guideline on aid-delivery methods, the MSFP was designed under a program-approach (also known as sector policy support program). Unlike the project-approach that follows narrowly defined objectives and prescribed blueprints, the program-approach is committed to providing budget support to recipient countries to strengthen country ownership, finance national development strategies, and promote sound and transparent public finances (European Commission [EC], 2007). The program-approach is designed to be process-oriented, focusing on long-term capacity/system development in the sector. Additionally, it involves direct transfer of funds to a partner country's budget where it can be managed using national systems (EC, 2007). In case of the MSFP, donor assistance was channeled during the initial phase through both treasury and off-treasury funding systems with commitment to channel

funds via a new multi-stakeholder entity/institution in the second phase (MSFP, 2012a). This indicates a vision for systemic and institutional development of the forestry sector as well as capacity-strengthening of the national government to own and lead the program.

Third, one key program feature was to harmonize donors' support to reduce transaction costs and minimize fragmented donor support by securing long-term funding in a multilateral mode (MSFP, 2012a). This feature echoes the fundamental principle of the Paris Aid Declaration that stresses harmonizing donor-aid for international development to ensure aid effectiveness (OECD, n.d.). Fourth, in the spirit of the fifth Principle of the Paris Aid Declaration that highlights mutual accountability among partners, a program secretariat for the MSSC was established at the Ministry of Forests, named Program Coordinator's Office (PCO). Another temporary unit, the Services Support Unit (SSU), was established as a donor unit to manage and coordinate for the program. The eventual plan was that the SSU would cease to exist when a new multi-stakeholder entity/institution would be in place to manage all program funds (MSFP, 2012a).

Fifth, the program boasted of being a first program of its kind in the forestry sector that was the product of a multi stakeholder design process (MSFP, 2012b). In addition, to

institutionalize the multi stakeholder mechanism, a Multi Stakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC) led by the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MFSC), was set up to provide strategic direction to the program. The MSSC had representatives from government line ministries, civil society organizations (federation of NGOs, federation of forest users, federation of private sector actors, and forestry sector professional institutions), local governments, and the three donors to participate in policy level collaboration for forest sector development (MSFP, 2012b). This agenda of promoting multi stakeholder processes is well aligned with the OECD transformative aid-agenda for international development to create country ownership and co-responsibility among all stakeholders (EC, 2011).

Besides the above, the MSFP also piloted novel attempts to use national implementation bodies to implement the program. Contrary to the past records of international non-profit implementing donor-aid projects, the MSFP selected six national NGOs through a competitive bidding process for program implementation (MTR, 2015). On the government side, the District Forest Offices (DFOs) were held responsible for implementing and meeting MSFP targets. This was in line with the Paris Aid Declaration Guidelines as well as the OECD guidelines for effective aid delivery that recommends

designing aid in a manner that increases the recipient country's capacity as well as strengthens their ownership, leadership, and accountability for the funds received (EC, 2011).

All the above features of the MSFP indicate that the MSFP began with variables that were predictive of success as it was well aligned with the existing international development agendas as well as the country level political commitments to lead development priorities.

However, in 2016, only four years after its launch, the MSFP was terminated early. What explains this early termination? It is surprising that despite encompassing all emerging international-development prescribed approaches to ensure aid effectiveness and a generous financial aid commitment, the program terminated early without transitioning to the second phase. This study aims to understand the challenges faced by the MSFP and the factors that led to its early closure. Broadly, it situates the MSFP in the ongoing agendas of international development and draws from the theoretical insights from varied disciplines including policy studies, political science, and science and technology studies to help explain the challenges and opportunities faced specifically by the MSFP and more generally in policy-level collaboration initiatives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 International Development and its Aid Agendas

International development (ID) is a multi-billion-dollar sector where development projects/programs are funded by donors from one or more rich and developed countries and implemented in another 'poor and developing' country. Official rhetoric highlights that foreign aid, also known as Official Development Assistance (ODA), has two main motives: promote development and reduce poverty (EC, 2011; OECD, n.d.). However, substantial research has demonstrated that foreign aid also has political motivations such as maintaining diplomatic ties, assisting in democratic political reform, and achieving security goals (Apodaca, 2017; Niblock, 1970; Unsworth, 2009; Wright & Winters, 2010).

In academia, the topic of aid-giving is a contested one and much has been written in favor and against the impacts of donor aid on development and poverty reduction. There exists credible evidence on competing explanations of aid effectiveness. Particularly in development economics, three distinct school of thoughts have emerged. Aid proponents claim that foreign aid plays a crucial role in improving livelihoods of the poorest (Sachs, 2006), as well as potentially in enhancing national security by stabilizing economies, thereby reducing conflict and refugee crises (Lucas, 2005; Sachs, 2016). Critics, on the

other hand, claim that aid is ineffective and harms the poor by fostering dependency and corruption (Easterly, 2006; Moyo, 2009). Furthermore, others argue that aid effectiveness from a macro-economic perspective is perhaps misplaced and advocate for a case by case evaluation of specific programs by using tools such as randomized control trials to assess efficacy of any aid programs (Banerjee, & Duflo, 2011; Ika, 2012).

2.1.1   Types of Donors and Aid Channels

Traditionally, two distinct types of donors have generated much of the foreign aid: bilateral and multilateral donors. The bilateral donor represents one government that transfers goods, services, and finances directly to another. The multilateral donor is comprised of diverse membership including state governments and private aid organizations. This aid can be delivered only by an international institution such as the World Bank or the various United Nation Agencies. Compared to bilateral funds, individual donors cannot track and pre-define uses of multilateral funds (Gulrajani, 2016). In addition, there are private foundations and international non-profits such as the Gates Foundation and The World Wildlife Fund that provide grants on issue specific projects. Scholars argue that multilateral donors are better positioned than bilateral donors to practice transparent and cost-effective aid disbursement due to their diverse

memberships. One reasoning for this is that bilateral donors may pursue political objectives rather than demand driven development needs (Apodaca, 2017; Brett, 2016). Others note, however, that bilateral aid has some advantages. Gulrajani (2016) discusses countries with long-standing relations are well placed to assist others owing to historical ties, specific technical skills, and other associations. She also highlights that bilateral funds tend to carry lower administrative costs than multilateral projects.

2.1.2 Changing aid relationships and agendas for development

The international development sector has undergone radical changes in its policy agendas and practices since its earliest days. In the 1970s, Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were used to shift the development model from state to market-led development (World Bank, 1981). However, widespread academic and political criticism of the SAP model related to its aid conditionality and its inability to respond to inequality or poverty reduction led to the pro-poor development approach through Poverty Reduction Programs (PRPs) in the 2000s (Brett, 2016; Singler, 2017). These reforms were institutionalized in the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Climate Change Agreements in 2015 (Brett, 2016).

The MDGs focused on reducing poverty and inequality and on increasing growth, envisioning that increased aid and debt relief would help all participants to achieve their goals (UN, 2005). While the MDGs stressed an increase in aid volume, the Paris Declaration was aimed at enhancing aid quality. Its main resolve was, "To reform the ways we deliver and manage aid" (OECD, n.d., p. 1). In the declaration, over 100 developed and developing countries agreed to enhance aid effectiveness by committing to five principles: ownership of development strategies by the developing countries, alignment of aid by the donors based on recipient country's strategies, harmonization of aid to avoid duplication and reduce transaction costs, result measurements, and mutual accountability towards development results (OECD, n.d.).

The five principles of the Paris Declaration are now regarded as a touchstone for effective donor-recipient relations in all settings. The MSFP design was centered around two core concepts from the declaration: country ownership over development and inclusive or multiple stakeholder partnerships.

The notion of country ownership emphasizes that there should be commitment to lead and take control of development goals, programs, and processes to achieve those goals

by the recipient country (Ghebreyesus, 2010; OECD, n.d.). Partnerships refer to multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups, and other stakeholders, where efforts contribute to the implementation of inter-governmentally agreed-upon development goals and commitments (OECD, n.d.). The MDGs and Paris Declaration call for multi stakeholder collaboration and partnerships as a key implementation mechanism to achieve the ambitious development targets (UN, 2013).

2.1.3   The concept of collaboration

In simple terms collaboration means to work in partnership. Ostrom (1990) suggests that humans are rational individuals who understand that they operate in a complex and an uncertain social and biophysical world. And adds that this capacity to self-reflect allow individuals to not just compete but also cooperate. The motivations for collaboration are diverse. Literature suggests that these motivations can be grouped into three broad categories that include expectation to reduce transaction costs, way out of a hurting stalemate, and to tackle wicked problems. The first rationale is that there is a pragmatic element why people choose to collaborate. Participants' willingness to collaborate is an outcome of decisions based on cost-benefit analysis where anticipated benefits is

expected to exceed the likely costs (Dasse, 2002; Ostrom, 1990). Others add that collaborative local forums have emerged despite the obstacles from adversarial political culture due to the anticipated lower transaction-costs in collaborative settings to manage highly disputed environmental issues such as pollution control politics, and watershed management (Lubell, 2005; Weber, 1999).

Another incentive to collaborate is because collaboration is a viable alternative to a deadlock. Sabatier, Leach, Lubell & Pelkey (2005) suggest that on several occasions, conflicting parties reach a situation where continuing the conflict brings only continued harm for both parties, without benefit. This situation is referred to as a hurting stalemate. They add that when conflicting parties agree that there exist no other alternate policy venues to solve the dispute, they will be more likely to negotiate. In such cases collaborating is the only way to change the status quo and proceed the policy process.

And the third incentive to collaborate is because it poses as a strategy to tackle the wicked problems of the 21st century. As claimed by Kettl (2006) the emerging issues faced by governments and societies are not limited to the traditional administrative boundaries in which public agencies are designed to perform. The characteristics of emerging problems

in natural resource management cut across different policy domains, have more than one possible explanation and solution, and at the same time one can be a symptom of another problem. Scholars argue that such wicked problems are increasingly becoming one of the key motivations to choose collaborative governance (Kettl, 2006; Ostrom, 1990; Weber & Khademian, 2008).

In forestry, collaboration can be loosely defined as a working partnership among the many diverse groups claiming an interest in a given forest. These key stakeholders include the local forest users, state forest departments as well as parties such as the local governments, civic groups and nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector (Carter & Gronow, 2005). In case of the international aid recipient countries, in addition to the above, stakeholders also include the bilateral and multilateral donor agencies such as the DFID and the World Bank as well as international technical agencies and research institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

2.1.4   Community level collaborations versus policy level collaborations

Based on the level at which the collaboratives focus their activities, Margerum (2008) suggests that collaboration can be characterized into three groups: action, organizational,

and policy collaboratives. He adds that at the operational or action level, collaboratives focus on ground activities and action. Most community level collaborations are operational or action level. Policy collaboratives focus on government legislation, policies, and rules. Dutterer and Margerum (2015) add that policies that are debated in such forums have widespread impact and precedent including at the ground level action.

Literature on collaboratives suggest there exists antecedent conditions for effective collaboration. These include high interdependence among participants (Daniels & Walker, 2001; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012; Thomson & Perry, 2006); relatively high levels of social capital (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012; Leach & Sabatier, 2005; Ostrom, 1990); place-based rather than just interest-based partnerships (Leach & Pelkey, 2001); and homogenous perspectives, shared interests, and few contestations on the power equation (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Ostrom, 1990).While community level collaborations fulfil most of these pre-conditions, in most cases policy level collaborations do not exhibit these conditions. This is because policy level collaborations feature some of the most complex types of collaborative settings as participants include high-level policymakers who bring their specific mandates, interests, competencies, weaknesses, and power dynamics to partnerships (Dutterer & Margerum, 2015). As such, the central

challenge revolves around nurturing a working relationship based on trust, mutual respect, open communication, and understanding among stakeholders about each other's strengths and weaknesses (ODI, 2003).

Most international-development projects qualify as policy level collaborations because of the high-level engagement of single or multiple donor governments, national and local governments of recipient countries, and other key stakeholders. It should be noted that while some antecedent conditions are not present in ID projects or policy level collaborations, they do benefit from distinct advantages that can prepare them well for collaboration. This includes important collaboration elements such as access to secure financial assistance (Raymond, 2006), opportunities for trainings and capacity building (Ebrahim, 2004), experience and leadership (Weber & Khademian, 2008), and access to credible science (Weible, Sabatier, & Lubell, 2004). Therefore, more analysis is required to understand how stakeholders interact and negotiate power and knowledge to advance policies and practices in policy level collaborations.

2.2   Conceptual Frameworks to View Policy-Level Collaborations: Problem Factors

The literature on ID projects' effectiveness comes from diverse disciplines including international development, business management, political science, and public policy. While in the business and management field the focus is on the microeconomic perspective related to project design, needs assessment, cost calculations, monitoring and evaluation and other managerial and organizational issues of the projects (Diallo & Thuillier, 2004; Rondinelli, 1976), the discussions in political science and policy studies are broader in scope. There is a general agreement in the social sciences that a development project's success or failure is systemic and institutional rather than just technical (e.g. Polski & Ostrom, 1999; Ostrom, 2001; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013; Brett, 2016; EC 2007) and is grounded in macro socio-political indicators that are related to structural aspects such as politics, socio-culture, or historical issues.

This study recognizes that in order to examine the root causes for a development program's success or failure both approaches are complementary and should be analyzed in parallel. While a macro socio-political perspective is important to analyze whether an ID project contributed to a country's larger goals such as that of poverty reduction, a micro level programmatic perspective is helpful to determine whether the program achieved its specific objectives and the challenges therein.

I draw from a World Bank study (2018) that conducted an empirical analysis of 32 World

Bank project outcomes. The study grouped project success and failure factors into three

broad categories: country-level factors, political economy-level factors, and project level

factors. To develop a conceptual framework, I merged this categorization with Ika's

(2012) three main categories of ID project management problems:

structural/contextual, institutional/sustainability, and managerial/organizational. Table

1 displays the conceptual framework of challenges and problem factors in ID or policy

level collaborations.

Conceptual framework of ID projects' challenges and problem factors

Country level factors	Country's political economy	Structural/ contextual problems	Issues related to:
			- Political will in support of the specific development agenda - Economic conditions such as revenue sources, aid, loans, grants, and macro-economic policies - Socio-cultural aspects such as religion, gender-roles, ethnic identities, equity and social inclusion, cultural norms - Attitudes and behaviors e.g. related to environment - History in terms of past development experiences, social and political movements, patterns

			for mobilization e.g. collective action • Donor recipient relationship
Programmatic factors	Programmatic features related to the everyday workings and dynamics of collaboration	Institutional Problems	Problems related to: • Institutional capacity including inadequate management systems, financial and human resources • Endemic corruption • Compatibility between principal and agents' agendas • Supervision efforts e.g. mentoring capacity • Leadership capacity • Policy environment
		Managerial/ Organizational Problems	Problems related to: • Imperfect project design and/or design process • Lack of common understanding of project goals • Lack of project management capacity/skills • Stakeholder differences/disagreements • Inadequate beneficiary needs assessment • Delays in project implementation M & E failure • Lack of local leadership/ownership

Table 1 : Author illustration adapted from Ika, 2012 and The World Bank, 2018

Drawing from the above illustration, I propose two frameworks to analyze the trajectory of the MSFP. For the macro perspective or the structural/contextual issues, I apply the

framework of Socio-technical Imaginary from the Science and Technology literature and for the institutional, managerial, and organizational concerns related to project management, I apply the Integrative Framework of Collaborative Governance from the Policy studies literature. The following chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks and their application in this case.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

3.1 The Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance

The emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnership, variably referred to as multi-stakeholder collaboration, cross-sector collaboration, and/or private-public partnership, emerges out of the increasingly popular view that the past strategy of solving public-policy problems through technocratic linear processes is becoming less relevant as the world is getting more interconnected than ever in terms of resources, society, and businesses. There is a growing call for engagement of multiple stakeholders with different forms of knowledge (e.g. science, experience, local knowledge), varied capacities, and an array of backgrounds (national and/or subnational governments, private sector, civil society) to participate in decision making processes and to collectively tackle the complexities of 21st century problems. In the academic literature, this is popularly termed as collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 212; Daniels & Walker, 2001; O'Brien, 2012, O' Leary, 2014). Since, the dominant international development agendas including the MDGs and the SDGs have established 'democratic and inclusive processes' as a binding obligation for both the donor and the recipient countries (EC, 2011; OECD, n.d.), it is important to

situate the MSFP within the broader literature on collaborative governance[1] in order to investigate its workings, effectiveness, and shortfalls. This study aims to examine the challenges that emerged in the MSFP program that envisioned using the multi-stakeholder process in order to achieve the desired outcome of stakeholder ownership.

The notion of *country ownership* has gained significant prominence in the development sector especially after the culmination of the Paris Declaration that emphasized development as sustainable only when the recipient country owns the development goals and priorities as well as the processes devised to achieve them. The MSFP has also highlighted the centrality of *ownership* in several key documents. The Common Program Document of the program states that joint decision and implementation of forest sector strategies, policies, and plans by forest sector stakeholders is central to the program (one of the four key program outcomes[2]) and indicates that the mechanisms of multi-

---

[1] This paper conflates multi-stakeholder processes with collaborative governance based on some core common characteristics that include the principle of shared decision-making authority, inclusion of diverse knowledge and expertise, consensus or near consensus decision-rule, and collective effort to produce win-win situation for all actors involved (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Daniels & Walker, 2001; SDG website).

[2] MSFP's four outcomes: 1. Government and non-state actors jointly and effectively implementing inclusive forest sector strategies, policies and plans; 2. Private sector (farmers, entrepreneurs, and financial institutions) increase investment and jobs in the forestry sector; 3. Rural communities –especially poor, disadvantaged and climate

stakeholder forums will ensure a greater sense of ownership on decisions made (ProDoc, 2011). Further, the program also envisioned a nationally led and owned formation of a new national forest entity (NFE) that was set as a benchmark for the program's transition to the second phase and a condition for funding continuity by the donors (JFA, 2012; ProDoc, 2012).

The report on the lessons learned from the multi stakeholder process of the program claims that the, "Multi-stakeholder forum has proven itself as a successful and productive approach in consensus-based decision making and implementation while ensuring greater sense of ownership on decisions made" (MSFP, 2015).

I use the theoretical model of the integrative framework for collaborative governance (CG) developed by Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh (2012) to investigate this claim. I selected the framework because it aims to provide a broad conceptual map for examining the workings of a wide variety of systems including program- or policy-based intergovernmental cooperation with nongovernmental stakeholders. While the

---

vulnerable people and households – benefit from local forest management and other investments; 4. forests and trees sustainably managed and monitored by government, communities, and private sector and be climate resilient

framework specifies nested dimensions of collaboration including a larger system context, a collaborative governance regime, and collaborative dynamics that generate actions for collaboration, for this case its application will focus mostly on investigating the collaboration dynamics dimension of the framework in order to explain the effects of collaboration on desired outcomes. Figure 1 depicts the integrative framework for CG as presented by the authors in three nested dimensions representing the general system context, the collaborative governance regime, and its collaborative dynamics and actions.
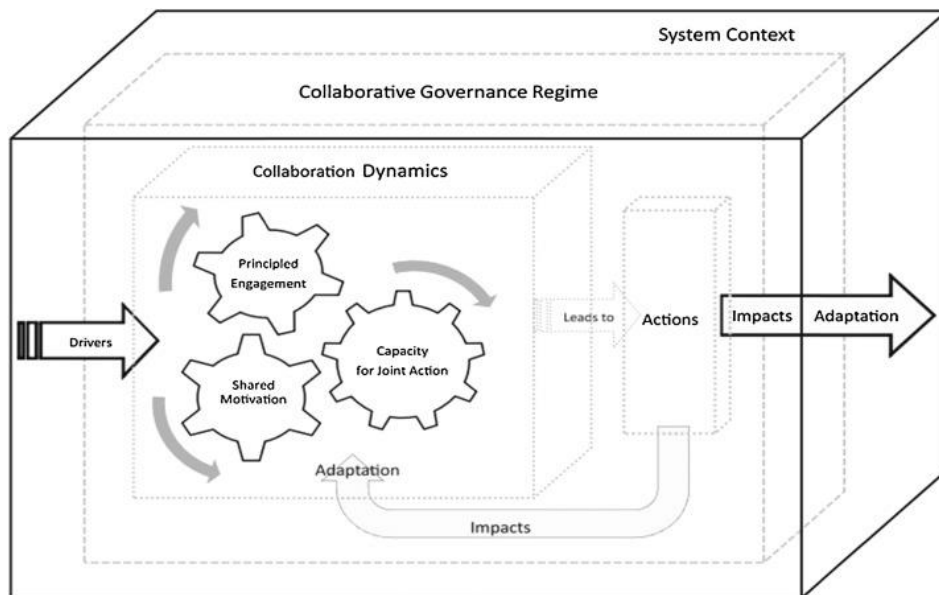
Figure 1 : Integrative framework for Collaborative Governance (Emerson et al., 2012)

This research focuses on the collaborative dynamics dimension of the framework – the three integrated and interactive components: principled engagement, shared motivation, and the capacity for joint action. It posits that collaborative actions and outcomes are the result of iterative interactions among these three components. Each component consists of several elements, which are discussed below.

3.1.1   Defining the elements of the collaborative dynamics

Below, I briefly describe the three components and their elements.

Principled engagement: The framework refers to this as face-to-face interactions and meetings where participants discuss their views, values, understandings, and joint goals of collaboration. This element is related to collaborative engagement processes and is deemed crucial to generate and reinforce shared motivation and build the needed capacity for joint action.

Principled engagement occurs over time through iteration of four basic processes:

- *Discovery* refers to the revealing of individual and shared interests;
- *Definition* characterizes the continuous efforts to build shared meaning of key concepts, purposes, and objectives;

- *Deliberation* refers to the perceptions of the process as being intentional i.e. receiving and exchanging of information, consensus-seeking, and having a voice in the decision process; and

- *Determination* refers to substantive engagement processes that enable strong and robust group consensus building.

The framework suggests that principled engagement creates and reinforces shared motivation and builds the needed capacity for joint action.

Shared Motivation: This component is related to the interpersonal and relational aspects of collaboration and is deemed crucial for participants to go beyond their specific organizational, sectoral, and/or jurisdictional boundaries to commit to a common path. Shared motivation is explained by the following elements:

- *Trust* refers to the perceptions of participants finding each other reasonable and dependable. It also refers to the participants believing in the capacity and skills of collaboration leadership and other members;

- *Mutual understanding* refers to participants respecting each other's positions and interests even when one might not agree with them indicating that they view their interests are compatible in the broader context;

- *Shared commitment* refers to the participants agreeing on a shared set of goals and objectives and committing to a shared path to achieve the collaborative outcome;

- *Legitimacy* refers to perceptions of participants finding each other credible and important for the purpose of collaboration outcomes.

Capacity for Joint Action: The framework refers to this as the ability of participants to generate collaboratively desired outcomes that cannot be met independently and/or with conflicting visions. The framework proposes this component as the link between strategy and performance as capacity determines how fit the collaborative process was to deliver the desired outcome. The four elements are described as:

- *Leadership* refers to the perceptions of the collaboration getting a sufficient level of strategic direction, mentoring, and guidance. The framework highlights that this element is vital during all phases in collaboration and can be a driver, an essential ingredient, or a key outgrowth of collaboration.

- *Procedural and Institutional Arrangements* refers to participants' perceptions of procedures and mechanisms related to institutional set up, reporting systems,

fund disbursements processes. These are the protocols that govern the collaborative efforts.

- *Resources* refer to perceptions about resource availability, sharing, and leveraging. Resources in this case include funding, time allotted, technical backstopping, and skill transfer.

- *Knowledge* refers to perceptions related to the knowledge generated, and lessons learned and shared in the process.

The framework proposes that the quality and extent of collaborative dynamics depends on the productive and self-reinforcing interactions among principled engagement, shared motivation, and the capacity for joint action.

3.1.2   *Program claims and the propositions of the Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance*

The MSFP program documents highlight three key variables as fundamental to the spirit of multi stakeholder mechanism: inclusion, deliberation, and ownership. The Common Program Document (2011), the primary guiding document for the MSFP, states that joint decision and implementation of forest sector strategies, policies, and plans by forest sector stakeholders is central to the program and further adds that the mechanisms of

multi-stakeholder forums will ensure a greater sense of ownership for the decisions made. Another report on the program governance aspect adds, "The use of inclusive and participatory approach promotes consensus based decision-making practice resulting in strong ownership of stakeholders" (MSFP, 2015, p. 2). Put simply, the MSFP had envisioned that an inclusive and deliberative process would lead to the targeted outcome of stakeholder ownership. "Full and equal participation of all categories of stakeholder is a key to formulation of any policy and to create and maintain ownership by all" (MSFP 2016, p. 8).

In this study, I refer to inclusion and deliberation as the key tenets of principled engagement based on the program's expectation that these two elements foster collaborative processes. As explanatory variables, inclusion and deliberation are expected to enable the outcome of stakeholder ownership. The definition of these elements with respect to the MSFP is as follows:

- *Inclusion* refers to the participation of all relevant stakeholder groups in the Multi stakeholder steering committee (SC) of the program. This included government ministries, local government bodies, donor agencies, civil society including user group, non-profit organization, professional association, and private sector.

- *Deliberation* refers to the program claims of a participatory approach to decision-making in the steering committee where decisions were discussed and endorsed by all members of the committee indicating consultation and consensus.

- As the outcome variable, the study defines *stakeholder ownership* as commitment and responsibility of the stakeholders towards outcomes set by the program. In this case, I specifically look at the ownership of a new institution, that was set as a benchmark and a condition for the program's transition to the second phase of the program.

Drawing from the framework and its propositions, I formulate the following theoretical propositions to test its validity in case of the MSFP:

1. Inclusion and deliberation (elements of principled engagement) fostered shared motivation thereby enabling stakeholders' capacities for joint action.

2. Ownership, as the desired outcome of the process, is dependent on the quality and extent of the interactions among the three components of the collaborative dynamics, namely inclusion and deliberation, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action.

3. If one or more of the components do not meet its intended purpose, the collaborative outcome is unlikely to be attained.

3.2   The Framework of Socio-technical Imaginary

The framework of Socio-Technical Imaginaries (STI) provides an analytical foundation to analyze how system level socio-political variables influence the collaborative processes. The integrative framework for CG, while it asserts that collaboration unfolds within a system context that is influenced by several variables including political, legal, socioeconomics, environmental and other factors, does not provide a clear direction or propositions on how systemic factors impact collaborative performance. Therefore, the framework of socio-technical imaginary is applied to understand the broader contextual factors that were most often beyond the stakeholders' control, to analyze how it influenced the program's outcomes.

The framework of socio-technical imaginaries was developed and introduced by Jasanoff and Kim (2009, 2015) in their cross-national study of nuclear energy policy in the US and South Korea as an analytic concept to address how knowledge, policy, and power are co-produced at the interface of socio-political relations, technological opportunities, and policy provisions. Jasanoff & Kim (2009) argue that an imaginary is not a mere fantasy but an important cultural resource that projects positive goals and produces collective desires to attain them. They emphasize that, "Imaginaries are at once descriptive of attainable futures and prescriptive of the futures that ought to be attained" (p. 120). They describe,

> Imaginaries are collectively held and performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order, attainable through and supportive of, advances in science and technology. (Jasanoff, 2015a, p. 6)

As an analytic concept, imaginaries capture the aspirational and normative dimensions of the dynamics of social change. The lens of imaginary allows me to analyze how new discourses related to forest governance are produced and how these knowledges compete, modify, and/or endure to become collectively desired futures (i.e., socio-technical imaginaries). The framework also pays key attention to the co-production aspects of the imaginaries. Co-production, according to Jasanoff (2004), is a co-constitutive characteristic of how knowledges (including scientific knowledge and technologies) and societies continuously and simultaneously evolve. She argues that knowledge both embeds and is embedded in social practices, identities, norms, discourses, institutions, or all things social that give practical effect and meaning to ideas and objects.

In the case of the MSFP in Nepal, the coproduction concept can be applied to help think about how the imaginaries about forest governance-reform are at once a product of and instruments for production of socio-political power relations, aspirations involving the

natural environment, technological possibilities, material infrastructures, policy provisions, and societal objectives. In other words, as imaginaries continue to evolve in distinct socio-political contexts it helps to re-orient the evolution of those very contexts. Figure 2 depicts how the socio-technical imaginary of forest governance is an outcome of the knowledge base, the power relations, and policy provisions that are co-produced at the interface of the natural environment, technological possibilities, and socio-political relations.
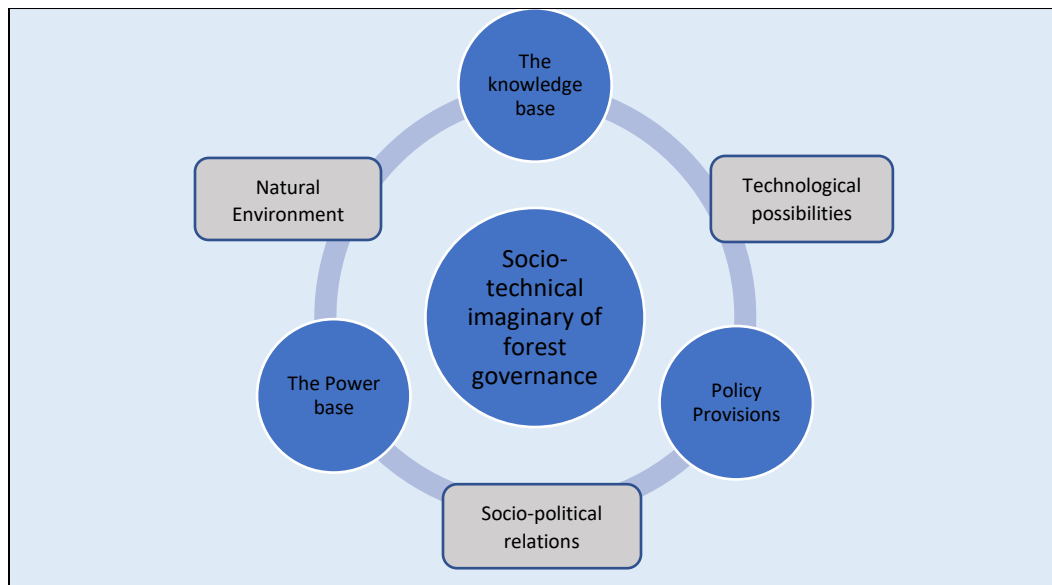
Figure 2 : Analytic conceptualization of the Socio-technical Imaginary of forest governance

The STI framework proposes that visions are transformed from mere actor-centric ideas into collectively desired imaginaries through four interlinked phases of origin, embedding, resistance, and extension (Jasanoff, 2015). The first phase is the *origin* of a vision or an idea. Though imaginaries can originate in the visions of single individuals, it is only when this vision is communally adopted that it rises to the status of imaginary. These imaginaries then spread across time and space through many overlapping pathways to effectively translate into new contexts. This phase is called *embedding* and can happen through production of material artefacts such as genetically-modified rice or production of a psychosocial infrastructure such as cultural meanings, memories, and habits of social interaction. The third phase is that of *resistance*. This happens when an existing imaginary is no longer sufficient to hold collective expectations, making the alternate imaginary more appealing, believable, and worth attaining. The fourth and final phase is an *extension* of a new imaginary that, "Calls for situated re-embedding in order for translated imaginaries to take root and flourish in new soil" (Jasonoff, 2015 p. 333). Figure 3 depicts the four inter-related phases of turning ideas into a full-fledged imaginary.
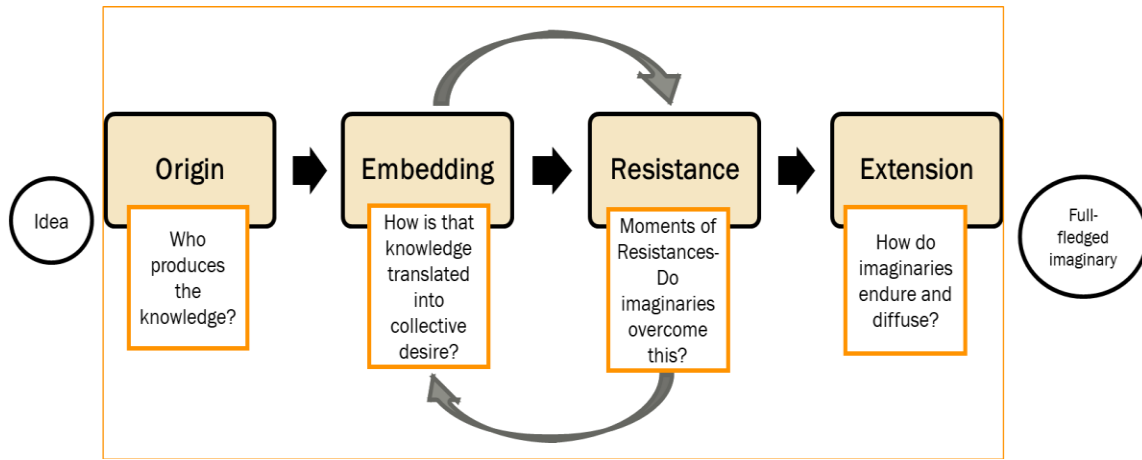
Figure 3 : Four interconnected phases for an idea to develop into a Socio-Technical Imaginary

Jasanoff (2015a) argues that science and technology policies provide key sites for the constitution of modern social imaginaries. Further, the environmental domain is increasingly recognized as an important location for the production of knowledge, power, and policies (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Hajer, 1995). The MSFP offers one such appropriate site to examine collective imaginations and the workings of power and politics in policy and practice.

Drawing from the framework and its propositions, I formulate the following theoretical propositions to test its validity in case of the MSFP:

i. An idea of a few can be translated into a collectively owned vision if it can be embedded into the societal values through the production of cultural meanings or physical material. In the case of the MSFP, the embedding of the notion of multi stakeholder mechanism was imagined to be actualized through the creation of a new institution, the National Forest Entity (NFE). The study investigates whether this idea was successfully embedded into a collectively owned imaginary.

ii. When an imaginary is not sufficient to hold collective expectation, moments of resistance emerge. This study examines whether the imaginary of multi stakeholder collaboration gained momentum over time. For this, it will examine the stakeholders' support or opposition to the prescribed pathway of the creation of a new institution to establish multi stakeholder mechanism at the policy level collaboration.

iii. Imaginaries continue to exist and flourish if they evolve and adjust to re-embed into the specific local socio-political context. This study examines if the imaginary of multi stakeholder mechanism for improving forest governance endured the collapse of the MSFP and if so, how did it endure and evolve.

4. METHODS

4.1   Ontological Foundation

In Nepal, forest users and stakeholders do not construct a clear boundary between the various purposes of a forest. Forests are at the same time environmental goods (sites for water retention and filtering, landslide prevention, habitat for wildlife, pollution management), social goods (recreational, resource collection sites), political sites (who governs, who has the rights and resources, access, control), economic goods (timber, firewood, medicinal and aromatic plants), and livelihood source (food, fodder, firewood, shelter, and medicines). Therefore, forest resource management must be viewed not just from an ecological aspect but also from the broader socio-political dimension of the country.

In this sense, the ontological position of this study is anti-foundational, in that it grounds the inquiry on the premise that forest governance as an outcome is not just technical and/or ecological but nested in a broader environment of power structures, knowledge centers, and perceptions of rights, authority, and access. As a researcher with an interpretivist ontology, I employ qualitative evidence for investigation guided by the understanding that there are multiple realities with varied interpretations and an

individual's analysis is only one interpretation of the relationship of the social phenomena studied (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012, Marsh & Furlong, 2002).

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1   Single case study design

This research is a single-case study organized through longitudinal analysis and systematic observation of trends, review of stakeholder perceptions and relations, analysis of events, and its impacts over the life span of the program under investigation. Yin (2009) suggests that how and why questions are better answered through case studies as these questions, "Deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or analyze cases that may be extreme, typical, revelatory or longitudinal"(p. 9). Flyvbjerg (2006, p, 19) adds that the advantage of single case studies is that it can, "Close in on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfolded in practice." The research questions of this study demand thick description (Geertz, 2008) and deep examination of the MSFP as it is a critical case for examining the challenges in policy level collaborations. The depth and the wealth of information required for such analysis cannot be obtained from information available to public scrutiny or a superficial survey of stakeholders; instead it needs a deep understanding of stakeholder perceptions

and systematic review of program documents while being cognizant of the wider influence of the social, political, unique context and the history specific to the case. Table 2 provides an overview of the ten-year program timeline and the concurrent key socio-political events.

	January 2012	2013	2014	2015	*July 2016*	2017- 2021
Program	**MSFP Launched**			End of phase 1, one-year of no-cost extension	**MSFP terminated**	
	First phase benchmarks: -Formation of a National Entity (NFE) -Forest Sector Strategy					Second phase: Program managed by the NFE
Key socio-political events	Constitution Assembly dissolved/Re-election for a new CA			Earthquake kills 9000 people	Landmark Constitution passed. Decision to form new Federal states	

Table 2 : The MSFP timeline and concurrent key socio-political events

4.2.2 Unit of Analysis: the Multi Stakeholder Steering Committee

While the MSFP had envisioned fostering multi stakeholder governance capacity from national to local levels, this research focuses specifically on the national level multi

stakeholder mechanism and its processes. This is because the study is concerned with policy level collaboration. The main governance arrangements for the program are specified in the Joint Funding Agreement (JFA) and the Common Program Document (ProDoc) where it states that the national multi stakeholder steering committee (MSSC)[3] shall act as the apex level governing body of the MSFP and shall be responsible for approving plans and providing strategic directions to the MSFP. Therefore, studying the perceptions of the stakeholders who participated in this committee was crucial to understanding perceptions of challenges regarding policy level collaboration. Besides the MSSC members, interviews were also conducted with the senior program staffs and the design team consultant who participated in several steering committee meetings as invitees or observers.

4.3 Data Collection

In-depth semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders and participants in the national multi stakeholder steering committee (MSSC) were the primary source of data.

---

[3] The MSSC was formed with an *ad hoc* committee at the beginning of the project (February 2012) and the full-fledged committee was first institutionalized in August 2012 with a mandate to meet in the interval of six months.

Findings were triangulated with secondary data that included all meeting minutes of the MSSC, an independent mid-term evaluation report, and selected MSFP program reports. Each source of data are explained in detail below:

4.3.1 Secondary Data

The first stage of data collection consisted of the review of program reports made available for public consumption. This included the common program document, program briefing notes, newsletters, program website, lessons-learned reports, the NFE (national forest entity) formation report, and the mid-term evaluation report. These reports were either published by the MSFP or were commissioned by the program.

Program documents that were not available for public consumption were also reviewed, including the meeting minutes of the program steering-committee (total 13) and the funding agreement between the Nepal government and the donors. I was temporarily provided with signed and stamped hardcopies of the steering committee meeting minutes and the joint funding agreement by an official contact as a personal favor. I photocopied these meeting minutes. In order to process the text of these documents, the photocopies were converted into text plus image pdf files using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC

and its OCR function. These documents significantly supported to corroborate information gathered from the interview findings.

It should be noted that while a myriad of reports was collected and reviewed in the initial phase, it became necessary to carefully select relevant studies and reports for analysis. So reports that included keywords in the title (e.g. multi stakeholder mechanism, governance, appraisal, review, lessons learned) were eventually selected for analysis. Other reports that were theme specific such as climate change or private sector engagement status reports, or the MSFP operational manual and the MSFP tender-documents were considered irrelevant and omitted from the set. Appendix C includes the list of reports reviewed for this study. All program reports as well as the meeting minutes were available in English language versions.

4.3.2 Primary Data

The second part of the fieldwork was comprised of in-person interviews with the program steering-committee (SC) members who were forestry sector stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between January-March 2018 in Nepal. A purposive sampling technique (Bryman, 2016; Maxwell, 2008) was employed to ensure

that one representative from each stakeholder group who participated in at least two steering committee meetings was interviewed. The respondent categories include four Senior Government Officials, one Donor Representative, one Program Advisor, two Private Sector Representatives (Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry), four Civil Society Group Representatives (Federation of Community Forestry User Groups, NGO Federation of Nepal, Nepal Forester's Association, Association of Collaborative Forest Users Nepal), one Representative from Program Implementing NGOs, and one Representative from the association of local level governments (National Association of VDCs of Nepal). In addition, four senior program staff-members, who were invitees to the steering committee, were also interviewed. The total number of interviews conducted was eighteen. The interviews lasted between 25 to 90 minutes with an average time of 41 minutes. Table 3 below includes the list of interviewees associated with their respective constituencies or organizations (names undisclosed) who were interacted with for the purpose of gathering information for this study. Appendix B further elaborates on the dates and length of each interview. In addition, the interview guide is included in Appendix A. Further, member-checks were conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lofland, Snow, & Anderson, 2006) by emailing the interview transcripts to all interviewees for their approval and for correction of any mis-interpretation of their perceptions. Fourteen out

of the eighteen interviewees responded with approval and/or clarification on the interview content. These corrections were incorporated in the final version of the transcripts. The interviews were hand and audio recorded. The language of conversation was Nepali. The audio recordings were then translated and transcribed in English. Only one participant refused to be audio recorded.

In addition, many personal communications and informal conversations with mid-level program staff and field staff from the implementing NGO partners and monitoring and communication team helped to understand the every-day implementation aspects of the program. For this, a field-diary (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was maintained to note observations, new lines of inquiry, reflections, and to make a mental note of new ideas and emerging themes. Informal observations such as how reluctant or enthusiastic the participant was to reveal information helped me later understand the undertone of power and politics that is entrenched in all aspects of the program.

S No.	Stakeholder type
1	Government of Nepal - Joint Secretary
2	Government of Nepal – Under Secretary
3	Government of Nepal - Under Secretary
4	Government of Nepal -National Planning Commission
5	Representative from the Donors

6	Representative from the local government bodies
7	Representative from the Private Sector
8	Representative from the Private Sector
9	Representative from the Federation of Forest User Groups
10	Representative from the Program Implementing NGOs
11	Representative from the Civil Society (NGOs)
12	Representative from the Foresters' Association
13	Program Advisor
14	Representative from the Federation of NGOs
15	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit
16	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit
17	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit
18	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit

Table 3 : List of interviewees from the different stakeholder groups

4.4 Data Analysis

A two-stage coding approach was adopted that included a) an initial coding and b) a focused coding strategy (Lofland et al., 2006). Initial coding was a way of organizing data and scanning for preliminary ideas, themes, and theoretical constructs. This was first done manually following an open coding process (Lofland et al., 2006) where emerging themes were developed by studying the transcripts repeatedly.

The initial coding and themes were then used as a basis to explore more focused and analytical constructs from the data. This led to identifying a two-pronged approach for analysis. Two different theoretical frameworks were identified to examine the case at the systemic or country-level and at the program-level. The frameworks selected were the Socio-technical Imaginary from the Science and Technology literature to analyze the country level factors and the Integrated Framework of Collaborative Governance from the Policy studies literature to analyze the program level factors.

The interview data were then uploaded in the qualitative data analysis computer software package, NVivo 12 Pro, to conduct more focused coding (Lofland et al., 2006). This coding scheme was primarily informed by the selected theoretical frameworks. The interviews were coded in two different sets to capture the components specific to the two frameworks. While the major codes were identified *a priori* based on the components and/or elements of the frameworks (Bryman, 2016), the coding scheme was further developed and slightly revised in the sub-codes through an iterative process as new information emerged during the process (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Appendix-D provides the coding scheme for program level analysis and Appendix-E provides the coding scheme for country level analysis. The secondary data were reviewed and analyzed manually to

extract relevant information on program claims, lessons learned, processes adopted etc. that were useful to supplement the interview findings.

The interview data were used as the primary basis for identifying stakeholder perceptions. These were triangulated with data from other sources that included the meeting minutes, independent mid-term review of the program (MTR), and other relevant program documents (Appendix C).

4.5   Validity and Ethical Issues

Qualitative research methods have been subjected to criticisms related to integrity of the conclusions on grounds that the process of data collection is very much dependent on the researcher's subjectivity, where they convey their understanding of what's going on based on their subjective experiences and observations (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994). I argue that the choice of methodology for research is guided by the research questions and purpose. This case study did not aim to establish causal relationships among social phenomena or to develop predictive models. Therefore, the structural approach to conducting research through direct observation, assumptions, and hypotheses testing

was not well suited in this case that aimed to develop a thick understanding of why and how a certain outcome emerged in the program.

For validity of the findings, a triangulation technique using multiple data sources to support conclusion was used (Maxwell, 2008). In this case, interview data were supported with additional sources including meeting minutes, program reports and other program documents. In addition, member-checks were conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lofland et al., 2006) so that interviewees had an opportunity to review and correct any mistaken interpretation of their statements.

This study design was approved by the Oregon State University's Institutional Review Board prior to involving human subjects as study participants. Approved aspects of the study design included the recruitment of study participants, semi-structured interview questionnaires, information and data protection procedures, verbal consent guide, and other components of the research protocol. In addition, I completed and have stayed up-to-date with the research ethics and compliance training offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program (CITI Program).

4.5.1 *My engagement with the MSFP*

I worked for the MSFP for three and half years as one of the managers at the central level as a national (Nepali) staff. I resigned about one year prior to the program termination in order to pursue doctoral studies in the U.S. Two issues arose from my familiarity with the program. First it provided me access to resources. "Policy-level collaboration is difficult to study because researchers often cannot interview high-level participants" (Dutterer & Margerum, 2015, p. 24). Because of my previous association, I could get access to and interview high level government officials and donor representatives engaged in the program. This also proved helpful for interviewing stakeholders and program staff. In addition, I was able to access non-public documents such as steering committee meeting minutes, joint funding agreement, and donor reports.

On the other hand, since I was myself a program staff at the management level, my exploration is likely influenced by my own personal understanding of the program and its processes. I have, to the best of my ability, tried to separate my role as an independent researcher from that of a program staff, even though I believe that complete separation is not possible. In every interview, I tried to consciously establish my role as an independent researcher. For instance, when interviewees gave snippets of information

believing that I understood the context, for example, "You know what our relationship with DFID was at that time", I politely asked them for elaboration. To ensure that I understood their perspectives and didn't interpret it incorrectly or biased it through my own views, I emailed interview transcripts to all interviewees within a week of the interview. It may have also helped that in my role as a manager, I had very limited access to the processes and agendas of the steering committee. This body was considered high-level with engagement of heads of donors, high level government officials, and key stakeholders. I did participate as an observer in two of the meetings during my time in the program. I believe that due to my limited role in the steering of the program, I was able to critically assess the opportunities and challenges in policy-level collaboration and fulfil my role as a social science researcher to collect and analyze data and to generate insights in an impartial manner. Having said that, given the interpretivist paradigm for investigation, I acknowledge that my unique experience and reflection has contributed in producing this knowledge and therefore some subjectivity is inevitable.

5. FINDINGS

This study applied a two-pronged approach to the investigation of the MSFP. The Integrated Framework for Collaborative Governance (CG) was applied to understand the stakeholder perceptions related to challenges of collaboration at the programmatic level. And the Framework of Socio-Technical Imaginaries (STI) was applied to understand challenges associated with the broader contextual and/or system level factors. The results are organized into two sections based on insights from the two frameworks.

5.1   Findings Associated with the Application of The Integrated Framework for CG

The main question the study aimed to understand was the challenges for policy-level collaborations and, more specifically, stakeholder perceptions on why the MSFP terminated early. Many of the constraints in the MSFP are linked to internal arrangements related to program management. The Integrated Framework for Collaborative Governance proposes three components (Principled Engagement, Shared Motivation, and Joint Capacity) in the collaborative dynamics dimension and suggests that how these components interact determines the collaborative action and outcomes, which in this case is defined as ownership of the MSFP by stakeholders. These three components are

divided into several elements (or variables) that interact iteratively to produce this desired result. Table 7 shows a summary of the frequencies of the interviewees' comments – both positive and negative - related to the three components of CG-principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action as well as the desired outcome, ownership of the program. This was generated by uploading data in the Nvivo software and coding perceptions as negative or positive.

Below, the elements of each of the three components are described in relation to the MSFP. Then each element is discussed based on the evidence from the primary data and supplemented with evidence from the secondary data. A summary of each component is included. After the three components are reviewed, data supporting the outcome variable (ownership) is described. Figure 4 provides an overview of the organization of findings from the application of this framework.
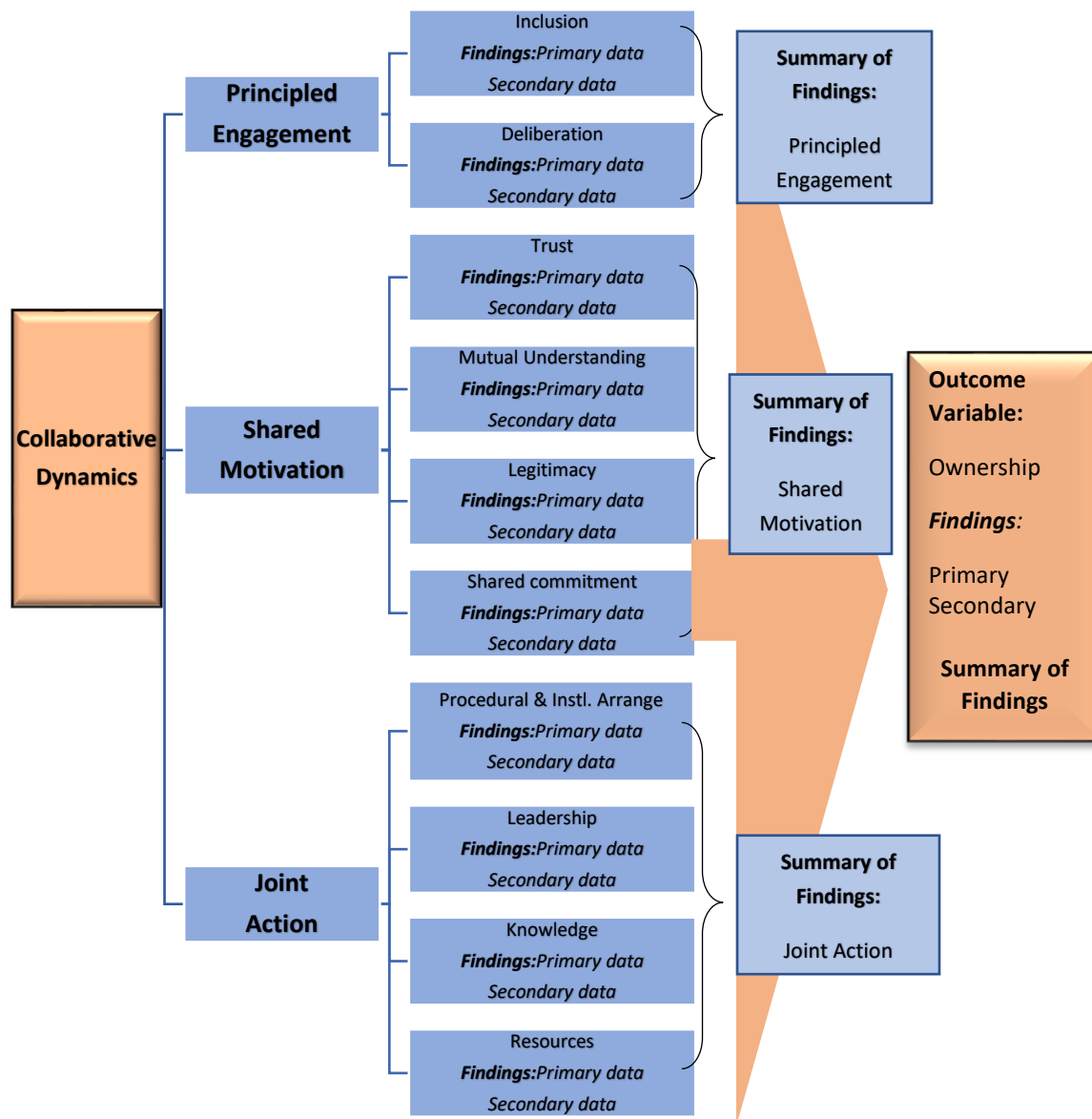
Figure 4 : Map of the organization of findings from the application of the Integrated Framework on Collaborative Governance

Component 1: Principled Engagement

Components	Elements	Description	# of Respondents	# of References
Principled Engagement	*Inclusion*	*Perceptions of wider stakeholder (forestry sector relevant) engagement in the steering committee (SC).*		
	+ Inclusion		11	13
	- Inclusion		2	2
	Deliberation	*Perceptions of the process as being deliberative i.e. receiving and exchanging of information, consensus-seeking, and having a voice in the decision process.*		
	+ Deliberation		10	10
	- Deliberation		3	4

Table 4 : Summary of Respondents' Perceptions about Elements of Principled Engagement

In this study, ***inclusion*** is defined as the respondents' perceptions of stakeholder (forestry sector relevant) engagement in the steering committee (SC). ***Deliberation*** is defined as respondents' perceptions of the process as being deliberative, that is, receiving and exchanging of information, consensus-seeking, and having a voice in the decision process. Table 4 summarizes respondents' perceptions of the two elements of principled engagement.

The primary data (interviews) show that more than half of the respondents positively associated the MSFP experience with the two elements of Principled Engagement, namely, inclusion and deliberation. An example of this positive association is reported by one stakeholder,

> *This was a first time so many new stakeholders and organizations were interacting together with top government and donor officials in the decision-making level. It was good (Interview 12).*

Another member from the civil society suggested:

> *In my opinion and experience, this was one of the most discussed, deliberated and debated forestry program with opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the decision process (Interview 9).*

The secondary data (Meeting minutes, Midterm Review, Relevant Program Documents) support the above findings. The mid-term review report as well as the meeting minutes provide evidence that in general the participants applauded the MSFP for its efforts to establish inclusive and deliberative processes in the forestry sector. For instance, in the tenth SC meeting minutes the chairperson of the user group federation is noted to thank the MSFP's contribution in initiating and developing the multi-stakeholder mechanism

from the national to the local level in the forestry sector. He further expressed appreciation for engaging the local communities in implementing different activities. While most program documents highlight inclusion and deliberation as key program features, there are some concerns raised by civil society actors about delay in the formation of a full-fledged steering committee with claims that the *ad hoc* committee was not inclusive. "It's bilateral represented by GoN and donors only" (2nd *Ad hoc* SC meeting minutes, June 29, 2012, p. 3). The *ad hoc* committee seems to have taken this concern seriously by including full-fledged SC formation as an agenda in the next *ad hoc* meeting. The meeting minutes elaborate the discussion over the roles and composition of the full-fledged committee members and states that one key consideration for committee formation is, "To ensure that the committee is inclusive – prepare a set of clear criteria and code of conduct ..." (3rd *ad hoc* SC meeting minutes, July 27th, 2012).

In summary, both the primary and secondary data demonstrate that most respondents were satisfied with the level of inclusion and deliberation practiced in the program (when they reflected on this aspect as a principle for engagement especially during the initial phase of the the program). This is also reflected in Table 4 where there is higher positive association of stakeholders with these two elements compared to negative associations.

Further, this is in line with the program claims as well as the framework's proposition that suggests the engagement component is the building block for producing shared motivational aspirations and the subsequent capacity for joint action, the other two components of the collaborative process. However, it should be noted that stakeholders had concerns related to the deliberation aspect (displayed with a higher level of negative association with deliberation compared to inclusion) with a few expressing dissatisfactions over the quality of discussion and deliberation for decision-making.

Component 2: Shared Motivation

Components	Elements	Description	# of Respondents	# of References
Shared Motivation	***Internal Legitimacy***	*Participants find each other credible. Participants view other participants as being important for the purpose of collaboration.*		
	+ Internal Legitimacy		2	2
	- Internal Legitimacy		6	6
	Mutual Understanding	*Participants understand and respect positions and interests even when one might not agree. Participants have compatible Interests [versus conflicting interests]*		
	+ Mutual Understanding		2	2
	- Mutual Understanding		10	17
	Shared Commitment	*Participants agree on a shared set of goals and objectives. Participants build a common understanding of program's aims and purposes.*		

	+ Shared Commitment		10	11
	- Shared Commitment		7	10
	Trust	*Participants find each other reasonable and dependable. Participants believe in capacity & skills of leadership & members.*		
	+ Trust		2	2
	- Trust		15	19

Table 5 : Summary of Respondents' Perceptions about Elements of Shared Motivation

As described above and in Table 5, there are four elements contributing to shared motivation in the CG framework (trust, mutual understanding, shared commitment, and internal legitimacy). After briefly defining each element, evidence of their presence (or absence) in the participants' perceptions is presented from both primary and secondary data

Trust is defined as participants' perceptions of each other as reasonable and dependable. In other words, participants believe in the capacity and skills of leadership and other members.

The primary data show that almost all respondents (16 out of 18 interviewees) referenced the trust quotient in the MSFP in a negative light. As reflected by one interviewee, "I want

to point out that there was crisis of trust in the program. This was between the lead donor Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC] and the donor management unit Services Support Unit [SSU], also between the SSU and the implementing NGOs and further even within the government leadership. This could have generated from the initial incident when donors were forced to cancel the NGO selected for program implementation, but it was problematic for the program" (Interview 10). While a couple of respondents did appreciate MSFP's efforts to build trust relations (Interviews 10 and 16), it wasn't described as satisfactory by most stakeholders.

Secondary data reinforce the primary data findings. The MTR (2015) links trust issues as critical to the management and process challenges in the program. As an example, it highlights the no-cost extension of the program labeling it as "messy" and time-consuming process (p. 59) and suggests that it created trust issues between the SSU (donor unit) and the implementing NGOs as well as between the SSU and the SDC (lead donor). The meeting minutes are a bit unclear about trust issues as all meetings state that decisions were made on a consensus basis. Further, discussions in the meetings are presented as concerns and clarifications suggesting all concerns were addressed in the meeting or in the following one. However, careful reading does provide evidence that

stakeholders were dissatisfied and distrustful of other actors or their actions. For instance, in the ninth SC meeting (18 February 2016), the chief of foreign aid division in the Government of Nepal (GoN) states that the Ministry had not received formal notice about the MSFP closure from the donors but only from the media. He adds that per the Paris Aid Declaration, development partners should support the country-led agenda and not other way round. This suggests that there were some trust issues between these two key actors in the SC at this point in the project.

The next element of Shared Motivation*, **mutual understanding**,* is defined as participants understanding and respecting of others' positions and interests even when one might not agree. In other words, participants have compatible Interests (versus conflicting interest). Primary data suggest that the interviewees considered the conflicting interests of stakeholders and their inability to resolve those issues as a vital challenge in the MSFP process. More than half of the respondents described this negatively in the collaboration process. However, it should be noted that the interviewees agreed that the clash was mainly between the two key actors, the donors and the Ministry officials, and not among all stakeholders. While the stakeholders mostly blamed the Ministry officials for their unwillingness to share power and control over resources, the Ministry officials blamed

the donors for trying to dictate the program and processes. The following quotes from

the civil society representative and a government official provide an insight on the actor

blaming aspects:

> *But the main problem was contradiction in the bureaucracy itself. In the Ministry, a few felt threatened by the formation of an autonomous entity. They even claimed that it would be a parallel body to the ministry, and it would undermine the ministry's power itself as it would have much more money and therefore power than the ministry. The traditional bureaucratic minds could not digest this or see beyond this. (Interview 12)*

> *Donors started to play a dominating role in the program, dictating how program should be unpacked. They pressured for fund disbursements and made decisions in a hurry. Coordinating with them was getting problematic. (Interview 2).*

There is little evidence in the secondary data about a lack of mutual understanding among

stakeholders. This is because the meeting minutes do not capture any major contests on

decisions made. However, the discussion section in the meeting minutes indicate the lack

of mutual understanding between government officials and donors. For instance, in three

meeting minutes it is noted that the government officials tabled the agenda regarding the

lack of infrastructure (logistics and facilities) in the government line agencies in districts.

Further, they added that the line agencies' capacities to deliver the program was lower

than the NGOs in the district, which they suggested relayed wrong information to the

community that NGOs were the primary service provider. In every discussion, the donor

head seems to have clarified that they couldn't invest in infrastructure building and vehicles for the government offices and it was Nepal government's responsibility to contribute to the program. This discussion is brought up in three meetings, suggesting government officials and donors never came to an agreement on this topic (cf. 4th, 5th, 8th SC meeting minutes).

Shared commitment is defined as participants agreeing on a shared set of goals and objectives. In other words, participants build a common understanding of program's aims and purposes.

The primary data reveal that stakeholders gave mixed responses when reflecting whether or not there was agreement on shared goals within the MSFP. In general, more than half of the interviewees reflected a clear and unified understanding of the program goals and objectives and almost all of them could describe the objectives and outcomes of the program, indicating a common understanding of goals. An interviewee eloquently describes her understanding about the program's goals and objectives:

> *The main objective, I believe, was to improve livelihoods of the forest dependent people through sustainable management of forests. The program's goal was to contribute in the national goals of poverty reduction. MSFP had four main components: To work in reforming forestry sector's policies and overall governance in a multiple stakeholder process. Second was enhancing livelihoods of the poor and disadvantaged*

population by mainstreaming gender and social inclusion aspects. Third was about sustainable forest management, climate change adaptation and vulnerability reduction; the fourth was about engaging private sector to invest and create forest-based jobs. (Interview 5)

However, a few interviewees brought up some negative comments regarding shared commitment among the MSFP participants. This was mainly with respect to a shared vision among the government officials as well as a lack of unified position among the donors. For instance, a few interviewees claimed that donors were focused only on certain program outcomes and that they demanded quick results specific to their priority area such as climate change, afforestation, or community livelihood improvement (*Interviews 2 and 18*). Another respondent suggested that there was conflicting understanding of the program outcomes within the government officials. She added with an example,

*…For instance, within government agencies there was little agreement on whether the Entity was a favorable concept or not. This was included in the funding agreement but there seemed little ownership from many high-level government officials. (*Interview 5*)*

The secondary data provide little evidence to verify whether there was agreement on program goals and shared commitment to the defined objectives. The meeting minutes show that in most meetings the program staff delivered a presentation highlighting the

main objectives and roadmap to achieve those, indicating that there were efforts to build a common understanding toward the program objectives, processes, and outcomes. And while the primary data tend to show that stakeholders could describe MFSP program and goals, reports such as the mid-term review views mutual understanding as a program weakness. The report notes, "It was a limitation of the program to be unable to build a shared understanding of the program within the Ministry and more broadly in the government overall" (p. 60). There also exists evidence of the three donors' emphasis on different results as well as government officials' not sharing the vision of the new institution. For instance, MTR (2015) notes, "The focal areas of the three donors appear to vary in relation to the program itself with DFID having a strong emphasis on the climate elements as the MSFP is part of DFID's wider International Climate Fund portfolio…" (p. 56).

In the analysis, ***internal legitimacy*** is defined as participants finding each other credible. Participants view other participants as being important for the purpose of collaboration. The primary data show that there were more concerns than confidence in the participants' perceptions regarding process legitimacy and on views related to other participants as being important for the purpose of collaboration. Less than half of

respondents commented on the aspect of legitimacy. Their concerns varied from

dissatisfaction over the selection process of the representative/organization designated

to represent a constituency (*Interviews 3 and 11)* to the steering committee being too

large to come to a consensus (*Interviews 1, 8, and 17*). The respondents with positive

views about legitimacy described how some representatives took the initiative to consult

with their constituencies and with other stakeholders before attending the SC meetings

to ensure unified agendas and to make the participation legitimate (*Interviews 6 and 9*).

Some examples of these different views include:

> *Another problem I think was that the Steering Committee was just too big. How is it possible to manage such a big group of 20-22 stakeholders? There was just about anyone and everyone on the table. (Interview 8)*

> *Yes, a good practice of prior consultation among the representatives and sectors had started to evolve. Because, as you know, the interest and needs of each organization in the SC was different. Local government's interest is not the same as private sector, but we all need to work together, and we can work together to find non-conflicting goals. (Interview 6)*

Summary of Findings for Shared Motivation:

Overall, findings from the primary data suggest that stakeholders assessed the elements

of shared motivation more negatively than positively. Of the four elements, the highest

concerns were related to the lack of trust among participants and the lack of mutual

understanding of goals. Most stakeholders discussed differing interests and the power

struggle (coded under the element negative mutual understanding) between the two key actors (government officials and donors), highlighting that there was lack of trust and conflicting interests that could not be resolved.

The participants however seemed slightly more positive about their knowledge of the program's vision and objectives there by indicating a positive level of shared understanding. The element legitimacy was the least commented on by the respondents but included more negative than positive comments. In this, the reflections were mostly related to the process of selection of representatives in the steering committee (SC) and how well the consultation process within stakeholder groups were being conducted.

The secondary data largely supplement the findings from primary data by providing evidence on trust issues as well as on the level of mutual understanding on program's direction. However, it provides only minimal information about legitimacy and shared commitment. As found in the primary data, the independent review of the MSFP and the meeting minutes confirm stakeholders' concerns about the overall component shared motivations within the program.

Contrary to the framework's proposition that principled engagement fosters shared motivation, the finding from this analysis suggest that in this case a relatively acceptable level of principled engagement did not foster a satisfactory level of interpersonal and relational elements, indicating a weak level of shared motivation to collaborate for action.

Component 3: Capacity for Joint Action

Components	Elements	Description	# of Respondents	# of References
Joint Capacity	*Leadership*	*Perceptions on strategic direction, mentoring, and guidance.*		
	+ leadership		2	2
	- leadership		13	19
	Procedural & Institutional Arrangement	*Perceptions on the program procedures and mechanisms related to institutional set up, reporting systems, fund disbursements processes.*		
	+ Procedural & Institutional Arrangement		2	2
	-Procedural & Institutional Arrangement		6	15
	Resources	*Perceptions on resource availability, sharing, and leveraging. Resources include: Funding, time, technical backstopping, and skill transfer.*		
	+ Resources		2	2
	- Resources		11	14
	Knowledge	*Reflections on knowledge generated and shared in the process.*	5	9

Table 6 : Summary of Respondents' Perceptions about Elements of the Capacity for Joint Action

The CG framework describes four elements that contribute to the capacity for joint action in collaborative efforts (leadership, procedural and institutional arrangements, resources, and knowledge). Table 6 above summarizes the respondents' perceptions related to the capacity for joint action in this case. After a brief reminder of how each element was defined for use in analysis, evidence from both primary and secondary data are reported.

The first element of capacity for joint action is *leadership*, defined as participants' perceptions about strategic direction, mentoring, and guidance. Primary data reveal that leadership concerns were one of the top issues for interviewees. About two thirds of the respondents described leadership issues in the MSFP in negative terms. The main concerns were related to a lack of visionary leadership to tactfully navigate the political challenges (*Interviews 3, 10, 11, 14, and 15*) and frequent changes in the key leadership positions (mostly on the government side) causing gaps in following through on commitments (*Interviews 7 and 18*). On the other hand, comments from governmental offices were more defensive, describing sufficient leadership from their side (*Interviews 1 and 3*). Commenting on program leadership at the donor unit, a senior program official reported:

> *The key is timely management of conflicts. MSFP needed strong leadership that could speculate and manage emerging conflicts timely and tactfully.*

We lacked this. You know, it is not possible to keep everyone happy all the time. A charismatic leader would have known a way out of the mess. We didn't have competent leadership. (Interview 15)

Another senior program staff described concerns about government leadership:

A lot of program staffs' time went to orienting the stakeholders about the program. In each SC meeting, we had to start by explaining what is MSFP. This change in leadership became a challenge to materialize the spirit of MSM as the new person at the table did not have had similar understanding, commitment, or interpretation of the MSFP. (Interview 18)

Secondary data provide additional concerns related to the leadership aspect of the program. The MTR (2015) highlights this aspect as a key challenge for the program, "A failure in strategic leadership and to provide the dynamisms necessary to move a large program into operational mode played a role in program's ineffective delivery" (p. 60). The MTR also noted that at the national level the MSSC was not able to effectively provide strategic leadership to the program. And that at the programmatic level, both the government unit (PCO) and the donor unit (SSU) had limited institutional capacity to engage the MSSC in strategic issues and direction- setting discussions. "Much of the time of MSSC meeting has been spent on what can be considered trivial technical matter such as seedling production" (MTR, 2015, p. 10).

The meeting minutes also show that the stakeholders held negative perceptions about leadership capacity. However, the minutes highlight the lack of leadership of government officials rather than the donors. In the final SC meeting, the lead-donor commented, "… Frequent change of senior government staff at the PCO (government unit) and in the Ministry was a challenge that had a direct implication on achieving the targets" (*10th SC meeting minutes, p. 5*). This is reflected in the meeting participant lists, which show that during the four years of the program, there were eight secretaries (chair of the SC) in the Ministry and four national program coordinators from the government side.

Procedural and institutional arrangement is defined for this analysis as perceptions about program procedures and mechanisms related to institutional set up, reporting systems, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and fund disbursement processes. These are the protocols that govern the collaborative efforts. The primary data show that about one-third of the stakeholders interviewed viewed the procedural and institutional arrangement in MSFP as inadequate to fulfill the requirements of a policy level collaboration. This is reflected mostly in their understanding of the sequencing of the program activities and deliverables that did not allow time to develop capacity among

stakeholders. The other concerns were related to lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities (*Interviews 15, 16, 17, and 18*).

Commenting on the program's activity plans, one senior program staff noted:

> *The local NGOs were given capacity building support to improve their financial management capacity and within the same period also assessed for their program delivery and financial capacity. It is not fair to simultaneously expect them to get training and deliver without any time to absorb the skills. There should have been a stage between capacity building and the audit per program standards. (Interview 16)*

The positive comments about institutional capacity were limited (only two) and focused on the MSM approach, lauding the MSFP for introducing the method even though it was expected to be a challenging task from the beginning (*Interviews 16 and 18*).

Secondary data reinforce the perceptions about challenges related to the procedural and institutional provisions in the MSFP. The meeting minutes show that the program designers had not adequately envisioned the management aspect of a big program like MSFP. The 2nd SC meeting (March 5, 2013) approved the formation of six new field level offices to coordinate with field stakeholders and to monitor the program implementation by the NGOs. That the need for field offices was identified only *after* contracting the NGOs indicates a gap in institutional design. There were also concerns raised about overlap of

roles between field coordinators and the NGO program managers (4th SC Meeting Minutes, January 24, 2014). The MTR (2015) also noted, "The capacity to manage at the center was not fully explored and led to Outcome Managers focusing on contract management rather than delivery of technical support and learning across the program" (p. 12).

Resources, the third element contributing to the capacity for joint action, are defined as respondents' perceptions about resource availability, sharing, and leveraging. Resources include funding, time, technical backstopping, and skill transfer. Primary data reveal that stakeholders were not satisfied with the levels of resources available in the MSFP. It should be noted that while the MSFP had a generous amount of funding available, the stakeholders didn't associate it as something that was leveraged by the program. Rather, the funding was viewed as the driver for collaboration and the MSFP itself. Therefore, rather than describing the benefits of having a large pool of funding, stakeholders discussed challenges in terms of technical backstopping (*Interviews 13 and 17*), skills and capacity (*Interviews 4, 15, 16, and 18*), and time allotted for program delivery (*Interviews 10, 14, 4, 16, and 18*). One stakeholder described the magnitude of limited resources:

> *As I said earlier, the technical management capacity, knowledge management capacity, governance capacity of the NGOs was not up to*

the mark. This was a challenge. I say that first it is important to build this capacity of partners then give them a time frame to deliver. But MSFP had provided limited time to develop capacity and expected partners to start delivering immediately. Time was too limited. (Interview 17)

Evidence from the secondary data corroborate the primary data that the stakeholders perceived lack of resources as a major concern. The inadequate technical backstopping to the NGOs and government line agencies are agendas for discussion in the second and the third SC meeting minutes, with the MSSC agreeing to contract out a third-party capacity building arrangement for technical as well as fiduciary risk management in the implementing NGOs (4th SC meeting minutes, January 24, 2014). The MTR (2015) notes that the capacities required in MSFP are specialized and can only be developed through a parallel process of technical training and ongoing on-the-job professional coaching by experienced practitioners. It adds that, "In Nepal there are only a very limited number of organizations who could design and deliver the required quality process of systematic capacity building in these technical areas" (p. 5).

The final element of capacity for joint action**, *knowledge,*** is defined as perceptions related to the knowledge generated, and lessons learned and shared through the MSFP process. Comments related to knowledge development were not coded as positive or

negative because regardless of whether the experience was reflected in a positive or a negative light, stakeholders all agreed that the overall lessons were valuable for them individually as well as for the forestry sector in general. So key lessons learned from the MSFP experience were coded simply as (presence of) knowledge. These vary from building new relationships *(Interviews 6, 7, 8, and 14)*, to being able to leverage funds (*Interviews 7 and 8*), to understanding collaborative governance and processes (almost every respondent highlighted this as the key benefit from the program).

As one stakeholder reflected:

> *If you see, private sector's entry into forestry sector decision making process was through MSFP. Now, even the government has recognized our role and contribution in the formal process. So, I think by introducing this approach in forestry, it has raised awareness among stakeholders and now they are getting their rightful place in the centralized bureaucratic system. It was a big step in changing the traditional system. (Interview 8)*

And, another noted knowledge gained from the process:

> *We learned that a lot of time, experience, and exposure is required for collaboration. And trust is fundamental. A lot of effort should be invested in building relationship so that stakeholders own the process. (Interview 6)*

Many program reports tried to capture the lessons learned from the MSM process, including *Reflections on the Policy and Governance Component of the MSFP from 2012-*

2016; *Results, Good Practices and Lessons Learnt from MSFP*, 2016; and *Innovations in Forestry and Livelihoods: Experiences from MSFP in Inducing, Documenting, and Scaling Out Good Practices*, 2015. Besides these reports published by the central office, many NGOs published their own lessons learned at the field level. In short, a considerable amount of knowledge has been generated, documented, and disseminated from the MSFP experience.

Summary of Findings Regarding Capacity for Joint Action in the MSFP:

In summary, stakeholders revealed mixed perceptions about the capacity for joint action in the MSFP. While most respondents appreciated how much new knowledge and lessons learned were generated and shared through the MSFP process, they described how leadership, resources (time and skills), and institutional arrangements were insufficient to generate positive results. Lack of strategic leadership was the prime concern among stakeholders.

Secondary data substantiate findings from the primary data with further evidence. The independent review of the MSFP and the meeting minutes confirmed the stakeholders'

concerns about leadership, resources, and procedural and institutional arrangement in the program.

Contrary to the framework's proposition that principled engagement fosters joint capacity for action, the finding from this section (similar to the findings on the element shared motivation) suggest that a relatively acceptable level of principled engagement did not foster a satisfactory level of capacity enhancement to manage the complexities of the program, indicating a weak level of joint capacity to achieve outputs.

Another finding from this analysis was that, while the framework discussed joint capacity as a key element to successful collaboration, it does not adequately capture constraints related to the different levels of collaborative capacities amongst the stakeholders. There is an underlying assumption that stakeholders have comparable capacity to absorb and/or leverage opportunities to enhance their capacities. However, as demonstrated in this case, there are multiple factors beyond programmatic variables that can influence the stakeholder's capacity to collaborate including historical context, ongoing and emerging political contests, existing norms and practices, etc.

Components	Elements	Description	# of Respondents	# of References
Ownership	***Government ownership***	*Perceptions on whether the program was owned by the Government.*		
	+ Government Ownership		1	1
	- Government Ownership		10	14
	Other Stakeholders' Ownership	*Perceptions on whether the program was owned by other stakeholders.*		
	+ other stakeholders		1	1
	- other stakeholders		5	6

Table 7 : Respondents' Perceptions of the Elements of Ownership

The CG framework suggests that when the process variables (principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action) are present in enough strength, that they will lead to the collaboratives' desired outcome. In this case, the goal was to develop **ownership,** as defined in terms of stakeholders' commitment and responsibility towards the outcome set by the program. In the MSFP, the outcome is ownership of a new institution, which was set as a benchmark and a condition for the program's transition to the second phase of the program. Table 7 displays the perceptions of stakeholders related to the ownership component of the program and particularly regarding the formation of a new entity, NFE.

Primary data suggest that stakeholders believed major issues about the formation of a national forest entity (NFE) came from the government side. More than half of the stakeholders considered the Ministry's lack of ownership of this new institution as the prime reason for donors pulling out funds and thus terminating the program. For example, one respondent noted

> *In my opinion, the lack of ownership of the government was one of the biggest hurdles for this program. Since it was designed in a way that government would play a key leadership role, and since in practice this did not happen, the program suffered. One example is that of the Entity. (Interview 18)*

As noted by the interviewee, the leadership component was directly linked to outcome ownership; lack of government officials' ownership of the NFE was perceived by most respondents as the primary stumbling block to shared ownership of the program. One senior government official claimed that there was a fair amount of government leadership and ownership for the creation of a new institution and a few other stakeholders blamed the donors for making ownership an issue when the real reason for program termination was something else. They suggested that the ownership of entity was an excuse for donors to pull out, noting that several factors such as change in leadership roles in the donor agencies and therefore change in their commitment to the multi stakeholder

mechanism (MSM) process, controversies surrounding the MSFP, and financial crisis in Europe were also reasons for funding termination (*Interviews 14, 15, 16, and 18*).

Secondary data substantially support the findings from the primary data. For example, the MTR (2015) describes weak ownership and leadership from the Ministry officials on NFE (p. 123). Further, it also suggests three other "strategic options" that MSFP could implement with or without the new institution in order to move forward in the program (p. 15). This supports claims of a few stakeholders who suggested that they were surprised that donors did not pay attention to the alternatives presented by the independent reviews on what strategic options were feasible if the entity was not in place by the end of the initial phase; if donors really wanted to continue support, they could have done it with or without the NFE (*Interviews 4, 16, 18*).

In the meeting minutes, the lead donor states the main reason for funding termination was because the NFE could not be formed in time under government leadership as well as the unfavorable audit reports of the program (9th SC meeting minutes, February 18, 2016). In the same meeting, a few stakeholders express their dissatisfaction over this unilateral decision to terminate the program even though it was promoted as a multi

stakeholder program. Overall, it provides evidence that the main ownership issues were described as ministry officials lacking a commitment to the creation of a new entity as well as donors lacking a commitment to seeing out the process in the face of the failure to create a new entity.

Summary of the overall findings:

Findings from the primary data on the first component of principled engagement suggest that most respondents were satisfied with the level of inclusion and deliberation practiced in the program. This is also reflected in Table 8 where there are more positive than negative comments by stakeholders about inclusion and deliberation. This is in line with both the program claims and the framework proposition that suggest that the engagement component is the building block for producing shared motivational aspirations and the subsequent capacity for joint action, the other two components of a collaborative process.

Findings from the primary data on the second component of shared motivation found more negative comments from stakeholders than positive ones. Of the four elements related to shared motivation, the highest concerns were related to the lack of trust among

participants followed by the lack of mutual understanding of the program goals. Most stakeholders discussed the differing interests and power struggles between the two key actors (coded under the element negative mutual understanding), the government officials and the donors, highlighting that there was lack of trust and conflicting interests that could not be resolved.

Findings from the primary data on the third component of joint capacity suggest that the stakeholders hold mixed perceptions of this component. While most respondents appreciated the new knowledge generated, shared, and lessons learned in the process, they expressed that the levels of other elements including leadership, resources (time and skills), and institutional arrangements were insufficient to generate results. Lack of strategic leadership was the prime concern in this component.

Contrary to the framework's proposition that a sufficient level of principled engagement fosters shared motivation and joint capacity, findings from this study suggests that a relatively acceptable level of principled engagement may not foster a satisfactory level of interpersonal and relational elements or the joint capacities of participants.

For the outcome variable of ownership, primary data display that a majority of stakeholders viewed the lack of government leadership and ownership for the entity formation as the prime constraint in the program.

For all three components of collaborative dynamics as well as the ownership outcome, secondary data supplement and support findings from the primary data. Overall, the results from the study confirm the framework's proposition that if one or more of the components of collaborative dynamics do not meet its intended purpose (or a satisfactory level for the participants), the collaborative outcome is unlikely to be attained. In other words, ownership, as the desired outcome of the process, is dependent on the quality and extent of the interactions among the three components of collaborative dynamics. In this case, most of the elements in the second and third components of the framework were not satisfactory for many participants. Therefore, the program did not meet its outcome, and this contributed to the early termination of the program.

The table below provides an overall view of the frequencies related to the stakeholders' perceptions (positive or negative) on all three elements of the Collaborative Dynamics.

Components	Elements	Description	# of Respondents	# of References
Principled Engagement	***Inclusion***	*Perceptions of wider stakeholder (forestry sector relevant) engagement in the steering committee*		
	+ Inclusion		11	13
	- Inclusion		2	2
	Deliberation	*Perceptions of the process as being deliberative i.e. receiving and exchanging of information, consensus-seeking, and having a voice in the decision process.*		
	+ Deliberation		10	10
	- Deliberation		3	4
Shared Motivation	***Internal Legitimacy***	*Participants find each other credible. Participants view other participants as being important for the purpose of collaboration.*		
	+ Internal Legitimacy		2	2
	- Internal Legitimacy		6	6
	Mutual Understanding	*Participants understand and respect positions and interests even when one might not agree. Participants have compatible interests [versus conflicting interests]*		
	+ Mutual Understanding		2	2
	- Mutual Understanding		10	17
	Shared Commitment	*Participants agree on a shared set of goals and objectives. Participants build a common understanding of program's aims and purposes.*		
	+Shared Commitment		10	11
	- Shared Commitment		7	10

	Trust	*Participants find each other reasonable and dependable. Participants believe in capacity & skills of leadership & members.*		
	+ Trust		2	2
	- Trust		15	19
Joint Capacity	**Leadership**	*Perceptions on strategic direction, mentoring, and guidance.*		
	+ leadership		2	2
	- leadership		13	19
	Procedural & Institutional Arrangement	*Perceptions on the program procedures and mechanisms related to institutional set up, reporting systems, fund disbursements processes.*		
	+ Procedural & Institutional Arrangement		2	2
	-Procedural & Institutional Arrangement		6	15
	Resources	*Perceptions on resource availability, sharing, and leveraging. Resources include: Funding, time, technical backstopping, and skill transfer.*		
	+ Resources		2	2
	- Resources		11	14
	Knowledge	*Reflections on knowledge generated and shared in the process.*	5	9
Ownership	**Government ownership**	*Perceptions on whether the program was owned by the Government.*		
	+ Government Ownership		1	1
	- Government Ownership		10	14
	Other Stakeholders' Ownership	*Perceptions on whether the program was owned by other stakeholders.*		

	+ other stakeholders		1	1
	- other stakeholders		5	6

Table 8 : Stakeholder Perceptions frequencies on all three elements of Collaborative Dynamics (counted as positive or negative perceptions)

5.2   Findings Associated with the Application of the STI Framework

This framework was applied to understand the broader contextual and/or system level factors that may have been beyond the stakeholders' control, but which nevertheless influenced the program's outcomes. The independent mid-term evaluation of the program states in its key findings that, "It should be acknowledged that some of the challenges MSFP faced were beyond its capacity and also the mandate, including protracted political transition making it difficult for sustained policy engagement" (MTR, 2015, p. 66).

The framework of Socio-Technical Imaginaries provides an analytical foundation to analyze how system level socio-political variables generate new discourses and help to transform ideas into collectively desired goals and outcomes. It proposes four inter-related phases wherein an idea establishes itself as a collective desire and evolves to become a national imaginary. However, since the process is essentially a co-productive

process between the imaginary and those that manifest the imaginary, the imaginary evolves facing resistance and/or support and as it advances it continues to influence the evolution of those very contexts. Below, I will discuss the findings for each of these phases. The map of the organization of the findings is depicted in Figure 5 below.
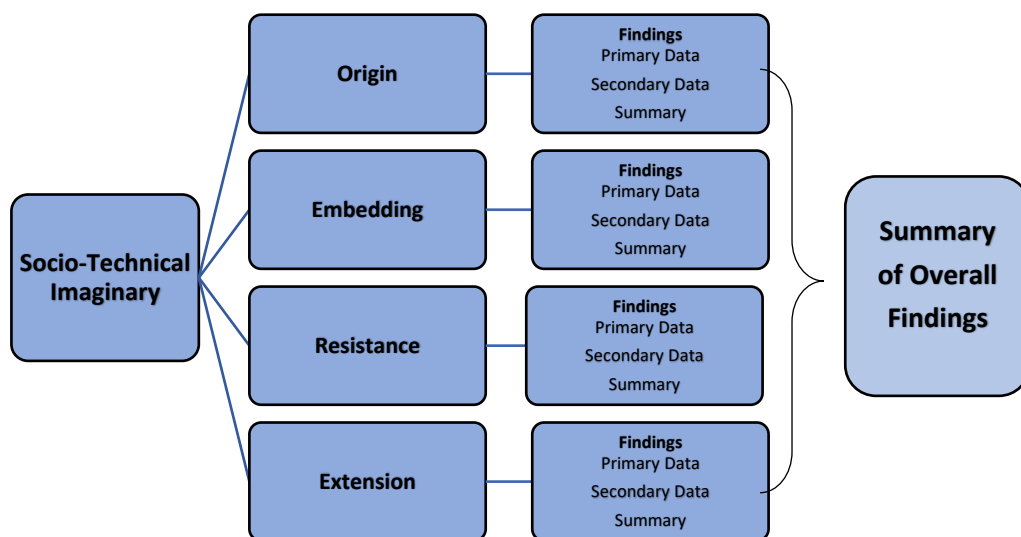

Figure 5 : Map of the organization of findings from the application of the STI Framework

5.2.1   Origin

Findings from the primary data suggest that the vision of the multi stakeholder mechanism for forestry sector reform originated from the expert community comprised

of international and local staffs and consultants in the donor agencies. Reflecting on the conceptualization of the program, a donor-representative with numerous years of experience in several donor agencies in Nepal stated:

> *A few of us, working for different donors in Nepal, started discussing the limited scope and scale of donor-projects in Nepal. We started to brainstorm how we could make participatory governance a nation-wide program with wider stakeholder engagement. Could we harmonize donor-funds and develop a nation-wide multi-stakeholder program? This is where it all started. (Interview 4)*

Another Nepali expert with a longstanding career in donor-funded programs noted:

> *I was among those who brainstormed this idea of multi stakeholder led program. This was the first program that was not designed solely by international consultants but with Nepali experts who had experience and expertise in the field. (Interview 13)*

Secondary Data

While the national experts claim a role in crafting of this imaginary there is no evidence in the secondary data, as no documentation exists to describe who envisioned MSFP and its processes. However, some evidence of international donors' influence exists in terms of the conditions of multi stakeholder mechanisms for securing aid in the forestry sector. For instance, the Joint-Funding Agreement (JFA) between the bilateral-donor governments (Finland, Switzerland, and the UK) and the Government of Nepal clearly

spells out that the funding was contingent upon setting up of a multiple stakeholder mechanism for steering as well as implementing the program (JFA, 2012). It could be argued that in the case of MSFP, international organizations played a decisive role in transforming the idea into an achievable possibility.

In summary, the primary data suggest that the origin of the idea of multi stakeholder mechanism (MSM) and MSFP emerged from the epistemic or the expert community comprised of forestry experts, consultants, and development sector practitioners. Secondary data on the other hand does not provide evidence to support this. However, it can be inferred that international donors and their support strategies had influence in helping nurture this idea.

5.2.2   Embedding

To analyze how ideas became embedded into societal values this research situates MSFP in the wider social and political landscape of Nepal, which has been in rapid transition since the 1980s. The Nepali forestry sector is a subset of the ecological and socio-political domain that has witnessed increasing demands for wider participation in decision-

making. Primary data show that the vision of multiple stakeholder collaboration received

a positive reception in the sector. For example, a few stakeholders noted:

> *In my opinion and experience, this was one of the most discussed, deliberated, and debated forestry programs in Nepal's history with opportunities for stakeholders to participate in decision-process. (Interview 09)*

> *I believe the driving force of the program was the multi-stakeholder approach. It was a big program, unprecedented in its technical and financial scale and scope. I believe there was realization at the conceptual level that a single sector approach was not sufficient for reforming sector governance. In principle, it was a progressive way-forward. (Interview 10)*

The author of the STI framework suggest that the embedding process is actualized by

opting for some pre-defined pathway to establish the embeddedness of the idea or the

vision (Jasanoff, 2004). They suggest that the embedding process is as much about

material objects and associated values as it is about ideas. In the MSFP, the program's

governance and management arrangement as well as the results framework is elaborated

in the Common Program Document (ProDoc, 2011). The program's agreement and

conditionalities are contained in a Joint Funding Agreement (JFA) dated January 23, 2012.

The JFA (2012) states the establishment of a multi stakeholder forest entity as the

benchmark of the first phase[4], with the plan to have the new national forest entity (NFE) take over the implementation of the second phase of the MSFP. The ProDoc elaborates, ""A key focus during the transition phase will be the establishment of a national entity representing key stakeholders…" (p. 13). Interviews with respondents indicate that this pathway was not an outcome of discussions and consultative processes with members of the steering committee. Rather, it was a pre-identified benchmark and a condition for aid from the donors. As one MSFP consultant working for a donor agency reported:

> *The MSFP had an institutional objective. As designers of the program, we were focused on establishing an institutional mechanism that would hold together all actors ensuring fair and just distribution of duties, benefits, rights and resources. (Interview 9)*

This vision of a new institution, even though crafted by a small group of donor-sponsored experts and passed on to the stakeholders for endorsement purposes only, was initially received positively by the stakeholders. They seemed enthusiastic and pleased with the potential of participation in the top-level decision-making body. For example, one government official told me:

---

[4] The ProDoc states two benchmarks for the program's transition to phase 2: formation of the national forest entity and the forest sector strategy (FSS). This study does not examine the FSS as by the end of the phase 1, the FSS was approved by the Ministry (9th SC Meeting Minutes, February 18, 2016, p. 6) even though there were inadvertent delays in its implementation past the MSFP closure.

The concept of a new institution to reform sector governance was a good one. I feel like there was a fair amount of ownership from the government side. (Interview 1)

This was reinforced by the meeting minutes. The second, third, and fourth meeting minutes show that stakeholders were overwhelmingly in favor of a new institution to reform forestry governance. For instance, the third and fourth SC meeting minutes show that stakeholders were excited about the prospect of a new institution, with many representatives highlighting the process-oriented approach and willingness to engage in the process. An example from one stakeholder suggested, "… we are willing to engage in the process of formation of the National Forest Entity from the civil society" – Representative civil society, 3rd steering committee meeting minutes, July 15, 2013.

In summary, primary data show that the idea of multi stakeholder mechanism was received well by the stakeholders. The proposed pathway to achieve this goal, which was the creation of a new institution, was also successfully embedded in the wider collective's vision. Secondary data support the findings of the primary data with a majority of the stakeholders reporting their positive perceptions about the NFE, as gathered from the meeting minutes.

5.2.3 Resistance

The framework posits that the imagined futures are deeply tied to the evolving context of state-society relations and may be owned or resisted by various groups and individuals. In this case, primary data demonstrate that the institution-creation pathway, despite initial positive reception, started to face resistance. In the interviews, most stakeholders claimed that the major resistance for the NFE came from within the Ministry itself, even though it was supposedly leading the process:

> *Some officials in the Ministry were worried about losing power. It was about decision-making power, fund mobilization power, human resources and mobilization power, communication power. All of it. Initially, they signed the conditional agreement with donors committing to form a new institution. Later they wanted to back out. (Interview 9)*

However, Ministry officials described a different source of resistance:

> *…there are several speculations on why the program closed, but the main reason is still unanswered. I don't believe that the reason is because the Entity was not formed. If so, then it is not a genuine reason. The agenda should be locally driven. Did the stakeholders demand for a new institution? No, they didn't. So why make the Entity a prime agenda? I feel that at certain times, inflexibility shown by donors on small issues created dissatisfaction between stakeholders. For e.g. the government side, many times, raised concerns in the meetings that the government officials didn't have decent facilities or good incentives to stay motivated to deliver the program. Requests to the donors to provide some benefits and facilities were not received positively. They were inflexible. (Interview 3)*

Another official described that the three donors were competing to ensure that their resources were utilized. This created conflict among them and perhaps impacted their commitment to the program:

> *Donors have their own conditions and interest when it comes to supporting. Bilateral donors want to ensure that their expats are hired, and their technical expertise are replicated. In this case, all three wanted their human resources to get involved as experts. There was a conflict on this. But my point is simple, why will Nepal need other outside expertise and technology when what is cheaper, readily available, and relevant for Nepal is Indian and Chinese expertise and technical support. However, donors have an interest to hire their own and pressurize to absorb their own resources. It is somewhat hypocritical. (Interview 2)*

Three other interviewees (*Interview 10, 13, 18*) who were not government officials also

suggested that failure of the NFE and MSFP did not lie solely on Ministry actions, rather

there were conflicting interests within the donor organizations:

> *In my view even if the entity benchmark was met, the donors might have pulled out their support. Not meeting the benchmark became a valid excuse but I think they had already set up their mind to divert funds in less controversial projects where there are immediate results to show back in their parliaments and where there are potential to create more jobs for their expatriates and consultants. (Interview 18)*

Interview respondents reported that the entity-opposition group in the Ministry started

to generate support as discussions on the entity development continued. They cited the

evolving political situation and uncertainties in the country that demanded attention of

stakeholders and policy makers on other national priorities. For example, a civil society

representative stated:

> *This was a time of political uncertainty and vacuum. There was political deadlock and a caretaker government for nine months. Key positions in the Ministry were vacant. But the donors acted stiff about their funding conditions and unwilling to adjust to the national priorities of the moment. Even I believe that the concept of entity was not practical at such a time of political turmoil and uncertainty. (Interview 14)*

The secondary data provide further evidence that stakeholders were skeptical about the

government's ownership of the NFE. Discussion on government leadership for NFE

formation is the main agenda for the eighth SC meeting (September 16, 2015). The

meeting minutes note that "… Chairperson of NGO federation expressed concern on the

delay in the formation of the NFE" (p. 7). It adds "…. [Individual] from DFID also expressed

his disappointment on the lack of progress on NFE, the benchmark of the MSFP initial

phase" (p. 7).

In response, the chair of the steering committee (Secretary, Government of Nepal)

reminded participants of the changing national context and the need to take that into

account before drawing any conclusion. This was reiterated in the tenth SC meeting as

well, "… We are expecting a new constitution within a couple of days. All Ministries will

go for restructuring process from a unitary mode of governance to a federal one, once the new constitution is promulgated. Due to this development and the changed political context, further efforts in the finalization of the Entity has been stalled." *-Joint Secretary, Ministry, 10th SC meeting minutes, July 13, 2016.*

While secondary data reinforce the power-struggle between the two key actors – donors and the ministry officials - the influence of wider socio-political developments on the program's progress is also noted. The MTR (2015) recommends that with respect to the changing context in the country, the MSFP should expand the steering committee membership to include representatives of rights-holder groups such as Dalit, Women, and Indigenous People's Organization as well as the new Ministry of Federal Affairs, indicating that the MSFP needed to be more responsive to the political environment in the country.

While there is no evidence in the secondary data to corroborate the primary data findings that the stakeholders had gradually begun to shift their support to the governments' stance that NFE model needed some adjustment to reflect the changing political context if it were to be successfully implemented, there are evidence that the stakeholders were dissatisfied over donors' decision to pull out the funds. "The decisions are supposed to be

made in a multiple stakeholder approach. But this decision to discontinue the program if the entity is not formed, appears to be a unilateral decision made by the donors." Representative- CSO, 9th Steering Committee Meeting Minutes, February 18, 2016. Further, the MTR (2015) discusses the lack of ownership and the failure of the NFE to adapt to the changing context. "One of the reasons why the NFE is moving slowly is because of the lack of context-sensitive and adaptive policy engagement strategies that MSFP could have adopted" (p. 41). The report also highlights that the NFE struggled to gain public support as well as main stream political attention.

> *There is limited buy in of the idea at the political level, as NFE neither did become a public agenda in a positive way, nor the officials inside the Ministry were themselves convinced to take the matter to the level of Minister. It is still unclear whether the agenda becomes a political priority at the political level, as it requires a minimum of Cabinet approval to come into existence (MTR, 2015,p. 24).*

In summary, primary data suggest that the pathway imagined (that of a new institution) to accomplish the imaginary of multi stakeholder approach gained reasonable acceptance in its early stage but struggled to retain support at a later stage. This is substantiated by the secondary data. The secondary data further demonstrate that the imagined futures are deeply tied to evolving state-society relations and the pathway of a new institution that was initially resisted only by the government officials started to lose wider

stakeholder support at a later date. This supports the framework's proposition that when an imaginary is not sufficient to hold collective expectations, moments of resistance emerge and start to gain wider support.

5.3.4 Extension

The framework posits that socio-technical imaginaries that are introduced through agents into new socio-political settings, borrowing from other experiences such as from other countries, other sectors, or a popular global phenomenon, need re-embedding into the local socio-political cultures and dominant national priorities. Extension, according to the framework, "Calls for a situated re-embedding in order for translated imaginaries to take root and flourish in new soil" (Jasanoff, 2015, p. 333).

In MSFP, primary data suggest that even though the program terminated prematurely, the imaginary of a multi stakeholder mechanism continued to evolve in the forestry sector through adoption into other programs. As one interviewee described:

> *The MSFP was ground breaking in many ways. One key aspect is that it introduced the multi-stakeholder approach and gave a taste of it to stakeholders through the steering committee membership. Currently, even the Forest Policy has recognized multi-stakeholder collaboration as a valid approach for resource governance. After MSFP, other programs such as*

REDD+ and Chure Conservation Program were designed in the spirit of multi stakeholder collaborative mechanism. (Interview 18)

A majority of stakeholders reflected that the MSFP provided them with valuable experience and skills needed for policy level collaboration. As one interviewee noted:

After MSFP, I had many discussions with top government officials. The outcome is that the government is now officially supporting our forestry division envisioned in the MSFP, even without donor support. This has been good for us. (Interview 8)

There is little evidence in the secondary data to support the primary data findings on extension of the emerging sociotechnical imaginary. However, in reading the meeting minutes carefully, it can be inferred that the spirit of multi stakeholder collaboration managed to endure even though the program collapsed when the pathway chosen to achieve the imaginary was rejected by the larger collective. For instance, the representative from the private sector in the tenth meeting minutes credited MSFP for, "Recognizing and formally creating space for private sector at the policy level," (July 13th, 2016, p. 5) indicating that the lessons from MSM approach extended beyond MSFP.

Another example of how the imaginary of multiple stakeholder mechanism endured is displayed in the Ministry's Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

(REDD) Readiness phase report. The report highlights that the strategy was developed following a multi stakeholder institutional mechanism. In the foreword by the secretary, the report states, "To oversee and implement REDD+, the Ministry of Forests and Environment has established a three-tiered institutional mechanism. They include: 1) Multi-sectoral National REDD+ Steering Committee under the chair of the Minister, 2) Multi-Stakeholder National REDD+ Coordination Committee under the chair of the Secretary, and 3) the REDD Implementation Center as the coordinating entity. In addition, a stakeholder forum has been established to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the entire REDD+ Process" (MFSC, 2018, p. iii).

In summary, the primary data suggest that the imaginary of the multi stakeholder collaboration endured even when the program itself collapsed. Primary data provide evidence of stakeholders' reflection of how the program helped them make new partnerships and access the policy level platforms. Secondary data, albeit weakly, reinforce the primary data that the imaginary of multi stakeholder collaboration evolved and adjusted to re-embed into the specific local socio-political context.

Summary of the application of the STI Framework

In this case, primary data suggest that the origin of the idea of multi stakeholder collaboration for resource governance emerged mainly from the expert community comprised of forestry technical experts, forestry consultants, donors, and forestry sector practitioners. This imaginary of multi stakeholder mechanism was received positively by stakeholders as seen by a successful embedding of this concept. However, the pathway imagined to achieve this imaginary, which was the creation of the NFE as a new institution, was ultimately resisted by stakeholders despite initial excitement. Evidence shows that despite the resistance and the collapse of the program, the imaginary of the multi stakeholder approach stayed alive by evolving, adjusting, and re-embedding into other programs that fit the local socio-political context. Secondary data strongly support the findings in embedding and resistance phases. However, only some evidence is found for the origin and extension phases in the SC meeting minutes, mid-term review, and other program reports to support the primary findings.

The findings support the framework's propositions that in order for an idea to successfully embed into the society it needs to latch onto tangible things or materials that can generate economic and/or social values. In this case, this was initiated through the idea of creation of a new multi stakeholder institution, the national forest entity. Further, the

findings also confirm that when an imaginary is not sufficient to hold collective expectations, moments of resistance emerge. In addition, the findings suggest, confirming the framework's proposition, that an imaginary may be able to endure if it is able to re-embed into the specific local socio-political context. In this case, we saw that the idea of the multi stakeholder mechanism endured the collapse of the MSFP and continued to evolve into other spheres of forest governance in Nepal.

6. DISCUSSION

This study is essentially an investigation to understand how and why the MSFP collapsed early. However, even though we are interested in what went wrong, it is important to recognize the contribution that the MSFP made in the forestry sector by providing a first-of-its-kind platform for a diverse range of government, civil society, and community stakeholders in Nepal's forestry sector to discuss, deliberate, and agree on various issues at the policy level on forest governance.

As informed by the framework of the socio-technical imaginary, an imaginary continues to evolve as it re-embeds into the changing socio-political cultures and in this process, it reorients the evolution of those very contexts. Here, the imaginary of multi stakeholder collaboration endured the collapse of the MSFP. The philosophy of multi stakeholder participation, that was the basis for MSFP governance, generated lessons for future policy engagement processes that have recognized the importance of diverse actor engagement in formulating pathways of policy change that is now widely owned, accepted and expected by stakeholders. While stakeholders thanked the MSFP for formally opening doors and enabling access to the policy level collaboration, application of the lessons

learned can be seen in other programs such as the Nepal National REDD+ Strategy[5] that

was designed using the multi stakeholder approach promoting national and local

ownership. The MTR (2015) adds that, "As a result of several multi stakeholder processes,

catalyzed in part by the MSFP, there is now increased recognition of the role and

contribution of non-state actors and private sector in forest governance" (p. 10).

To start this section, therefore, it is important first to recognize the good intentions and

the ambitions of the MSFP designers, government leaders, donors, and the stakeholders.

These are not to be dismissed because the MSFP fell short of its desired expectations in

terms of the goals and benchmarks. Results of this study and existing literature suggest

that the process is as important as the outcomes. The new relationships and capacity

enhancement are meaningful progress in collaborative settings that are characterized

with multiple actors, issues, interest, values, goals, history, regimes and rules. Some

scholars in fact suggest focusing on progress and small wins as appropriate measures to

---

[5] The Ministry of Forestry formally endorsed the REDD+ strategy in early 2018 highlighting multiple stakeholder inclusion and representation of both state and non-state actors even though several studies reported that the existing power dynamics led to techno-bureaucratic control over the process (e.g. Bastakoti & Davidsen, 2015).

evaluate collaborative projects rather than an all-or-nothing metric of success and failure

(Daniels & Walker, 2001; O'Brien, 2012). The point is that context matters. What works,

where, and why is context dependent. What did not work out in this case may not be

exactly applicable in another sector, or country, or another context. Therefore, any

generalization may be hasty. However, as they say, scientific progress is built on failure,

so it is important not to ignore the lessons learned from this loss. We need to be honest

about failures and shortfalls to learn better and to promote the values of transparency.

This may be even more important in international development projects where stakes are

spread wide into the donor countries as well as in the recipient nations.

6.1   Lessons from the Application of the Integrated Framework on CG

The straight forward explanation for why the MSFP terminated prematurely is that the

program was unable to meet its key benchmark, which was the creation of a nationally

owned multi stakeholder national forest entity (NFE). As informed by the lead donor in

the 10th SC meeting minutes, this was the main reason for withdrawing the funds, thereby

terminating the program[6].

---

[6] However, the joint secretary in the Ministry reported during the interview that MSFP wasn't completely terminated. Some aspects such as Sustainable Forest Management are being continued by the Government as a part of the national forestry program.

The application of the Integrated framework for Collaborative Governance helps explain the stakeholders' perspective on why the NFE could not be established and what variables posed constraints at the programmatic level for MSFP's success. The two key program level limitations according to the stakeholders were the lack of leadership in terms of program management as well as strategic direction and the lack of trust, mainly between Ministry officials and the donors. I propose merging lack of trust into the element lack of leadership as the trust aspect was mainly directed toward not having trust in the leadership to resolve conflicts amongst their differing goals and interests. There was little or no evidence on perceptions of distrust among other stakeholders in general. Further, trust is an element that can be built over time as parties work together (Emerson et al., 2012).

While it may be a simplification, the CG framework provides a frame of reference for the general causal linkages that resulted in the inability to achieve the desired outcome. In this case, it suggests that the lack of sufficient leadership (program level and strategic direction level) led to a lack of ownership of the NFE agenda. And the lack of the ownership of the NFE, initially from the ministry officials and later supported by other

stakeholders, halted the NFE formation and caused the donors to withdraw funding, thereby terminating the program.

Thus, the donors' explanation and the stakeholders' perceptions provide complementary evidence to support each other's claims. However, this study found two limitations of this framework. Firstly, it identified that the framework did not provide space to adequately capture constraints related to the diverse collaboration capacities of the stakeholders. The collaboration "readiness" aspect was strongly put forward by several respondents who shared that with starkly different levels of stakeholder capacities that varied in technical knowledge, experience of policy-level collaboration, and funds to conduct consultations within their own constituencies, the process favored some stakeholders over others. This has also been noted in the program review report that highlights the inadequate institutional and individual capacity of the steering committee representatives and suggests providing additional technical assistance, so that all stakeholders and experiences are better represented in the meetings (MTR, 2015). Based on this finding, this study recommends including an additional element "collaboration readiness" in the joint capacity component of the framework to increase robustness and to encompass these additional aspects of collaboration challenges and opportunities.

In addition, the study also found that the framework set aside issues related to power and political dynamics as components of the system context. However, it provides no guidance to examine the factors operating at the system level. Therefore, the framework of socio-technical imaginaries was selected to understand country level contextual factors and its influence on the MSFP.

Before discussing the Socio Technical Imaginary and its contribution to this study, I will first discuss the leadership and its impact on the MSFP as the key constraint in achieving MSFP's goals as informed by the integrative framework of collaborative dynamics.

There exists a well-established literature on the importance of leadership for collaborative success (e.g. Ansell & Gash, 2008; Leach & Pelkey, 2001; Leach & Sabatier, 2005; Weber & Khademian, 2008). However, less attention has been paid to the relationship between collaboration outcomes and political leadership (Dutterer & Margerum, 2015). While it is important to note that most of the stakeholders interviewed for this study overwhelmingly suggested that a lack of strong program leadership from the government side was a key factor in its termination, further analysis points out that

since this was a policy-level collaboration, political leadership was also a determining factor in how the collaboration proceeded. Although there is evidence about the lack of political leadership from the Nepali side (example includes the frequent change in the key ministry positions and staffs in the MSFP government unit), this lack was not limited to the Nepali side. The bi-lateral donor organizations were also dealing with evolving positions, shifting commitments, as well as changes back in their own parliaments. For instance, the lead donor mentions briefly their own revised political strategies and its impact on the program in the SC meeting "… In addition to this, the budget for the development in Nepal has been cut among other reasons, due to the economic and fiscal difficulties in Switzerland and Europe." (9th SC Meeting Minutes, February 18, 2016, p.9).

A senior government official noted in his interview that there was high-level loss of political leadership over time due to unresolved conflicts and power struggles among the four governments collaborating in the MSFP. Such reflections suggest the early success of MSFP may have been fueled by high-level political attention from the donors and the recipient Ministry. But, with the emerging conflicts within the donors and between donors and the Ministry ragrding formation of a new institution to manage forestry funds, commitment from political leadership faded. As noted by one senior program staff,

In my opinion, there was a gradual lack of ownership by the Nepali government. And then again, there was a change of government in all donor countries with new conservative governments that were questioning the country-specific results. I think they had already set up their minds to pull out from MSFP and divert funds in less controversial projects and other programs with quick results. (Interview 17)

In summary, leadership from the donors' side displayed willingness to absorb the high transaction costs of initiating the MSFP collaboration by providing funds, laying out grant conditions, and supporting with resources such as technical and advisory guidance. However, even by subsidizing the costs of stakeholder participation in the policy processes it could not generate sufficient government ownership, stakeholder support, and political leadership. As the mid-term review report (MTR, 2015) notes that there was a limited buy in of the idea of the NFE at the political level and it didn't become a public agenda either. It adds that the officials inside the Ministry itself didn't seem convinced to take the matter to the Minister for endorsement of this. This confirms the scholarly argument in the international aid debate that donor-subsidized transaction costs for collaboration leads to weak internal accountability and ownership (Ojha, 2011; MTR, 2015). And that ownership through opportunity to share political space versus ownership prescribed through funding commitment are two different things (Hemmati, Dodds, Enayati, & McHarry, 2001). This further supports the literature that collaborations are

more likely to succeed if they are organically generated from within a community and with organic leaders who emerge from within the community of stakeholders (e.g., Ansell and Gash, 2008, Hemmati et al., 2001).

6.2   Lessons from the Application of the Socio-technical Imaginary

Drawing from the STI framework, this paper suggests that the resource governance domain serves as a key site for the constitution of modern social imaginaries and for examining the workings of power and politics in policy and practice. Two conceptual themes emerge from this case that demand further discussion and attention: the adequacy of good institutional design for improving resource governance and the role of power and politics in policy and practice. Each is discussed below.

6.2.1   The adequacy of good institutional design for improving resource governance

The STI pays key attention to the co-production aspects of the imaginaries. It refers to embedding and resistance phases as processes of co-production of ideas, materiality, and values that continuously and simultaneously evolve. Jasanoff (2015b) argues that embedding can happen through the production of ideas, discourses, or physical materials to create cultural meanings and processes of social interaction. She adds that in order for

ideas to gain support outside of specialized networks or bounded communities, they often latch onto tangible things. In other words, the embedding process is as much about material objects and associated values as it is about ideas. In the case of the MSFP, the embedding of the new vision of multi stakeholder collaboration was imagined to be fulfilled by the creation of a well-funded new institution.

Since the culmination of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, the international development-aid discourse has shifted to promoting approaches where donors are partners in development rather than architects and program implementers. One of the key principles of the declaration suggests institutional reform in the recipient nation as the cornerstone to improve aid effectiveness (OECD, n.d.). Some argue that attributing past failures to the institution and governance related inefficiencies of the recipient states is an excuse to cover aid-agencies' own shortcomings and to justify their continued presence in the developing world (Crawford, 2003; World Bank, 1992). However, this focus on getting the institutions right is not new (Agrawal, 2007; Ostrom, 1990) and has been closely tied with attempts to depoliticize development by rendering it as a technical rather than a political issue (World Bank, 1992).

In recent years, a small yet growing body of literature in development studies has started to question whether good institutions alone are sufficient to reform resource governance indicating that resource management has to be viewed as much from the socio-political dimension as from the technical and/or ecological dimension (e.g. Cleaver & Franks, 2005; Nightingale, 2017). Complementing this argument, Unsworth (2009) critically questions development aid's default position, which is still technocratic and apolitical despite the long-term understanding and popular rhetoric that argues that constraints to development are largely political and not just technical. The MSFP case contributes to this literature by demonstrating that getting the institutions right is not a sufficient condition (or indicator) for a successful development initiative. This is illustrated by the collapse of the MSFP despite the availability of funds and completion of all ground work for the establishment of the NFE. About USD 53,000 was invested on a consultative process to inform, interact, and get feedback from stakeholders at local, regional and national levels to prepare the NFE's formation and function guidelines and to ensure that stakeholders took ownership of this new institution (NFE Report, 2015). The resulting report provided three models of how an NFE could be structured with top-notch technical input from experts. However, despite this ground-up consultative process and sound technical advice on the institutional mechanism of the NFE, it could not be established in this effort.

One analysis for this failure is that it was a typical case of isolating the institutional solution as a de-politicized development initiative. However, the MSFP was being implemented in a contested Nepali political landscape of federalization, creation of new administrative borders, and emergence of new political relationships. Therefore, while technical-solutions such as institution-building could continue to be a development agenda, it is equally important to pay close attention to the socio-political dynamics and commitment of political leadership in the development processes. In the words of a high-level government official:

> *The MSFP was a political project, not a technical one. Now I feel that the benchmarks set were too ambitious. We were too optimistic of the country's changing political dynamics. We spent the last 25 years trying to do something, and suddenly with an influx of big aid-money, we imagined we could achieve that goal in four years. It was a naïve expectation. (Interview 4)*

6.2.2 Power and politics in policy and practice

The above analysis on why technical solutions alone are not adequate if they overlook the political reality and social dynamics segues the discussion into the power and politics aspects in the development aid relationship.

Drawing from Ahlborg & Nightingale (2018) and Purdy (2016), power here is conceptualized broadly to include not just coercive power but rather as a resource that is relational, contingent, productive, and transferable depending on the context. Power in this sense is not just direct domination over action, people or the outcomes, but as much about the possibility to produce them (Agrawal & Bauer, 2005). This follows the Foucauldian understanding of power not just in negative terms of disciplinary power, but as a productive network that produces discourse and knowledge that both constrain actors as well as constitute them (Foucault, 1991). Politics is conceptualized in narrower terms to encompass the formal political parties and the formal governmental processes (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 2017).

Nightingale (2017, p. 12) argues that, "Projects which seek to empower actors to manage their resources, produce realignments of power that then shape who is invested in what manner in those projects." This suggests that even though the donor agencies claim they are not interfering in the domestic or the foreign policies of the recipient countries, by investing in programs that seek to produce certain understandings of rights, responsibility, inclusion etc., they are inherently contributing to the power and politics at play in the host country.

This study suggests that the MSFP was embroiled in the political sphere as much as in the technical resource governance aspects as it promoted certain ideas about inclusion, participation, and rights. As these issues were simultaneously at the center of the national politics at the same time the MSFP was implemented, it is important to situate and analyze the MSFP in the wider national level social and political landscape of the country. For instance, the independent evaluation report of the program recommends the need for the MSFP to be more responsive to the national political environment that was deeply contested along the lines of ethnic identity, minority, and indigenous people's rights (MTR, 2016). It highlights that in MSFP it is not enough to include different social groups under the broad rubric of civil society by assigning a single seat for representation in the steering committee. Instead, it recommends recognizing that civil society representation should be expanded to allow several seats to different groups such as indigenous groups, women in natural resources, dalits (i.e., the lowest caste group) in resource management etc. Some evidence of enhancing inclusivity efforts is seen as the MSFP had already started numerous consultations and collaborations with members of specific interest groups such as the Himalayan Grassroots Women Natural Resource Management Association, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, and Dalit Association for

Natural Resources (NFE Report, 2015). In other words, prioritization of program funds for

district selection for program implementation, capacity building and other trainings, and

promotion of scientific forest management practices was highly influenced by the

national politics and not just based on an urgency of biophysical vulnerabilities.

Therefore, politics was constitutive of the MSFP in terms of whose rights and/or

vulnerabilities were prioritized in design and implementation. In addition, Rankin,

Nightingale, Hamal, & Sigdel (2018) highlight that in Nepal, the majority of NGOs are

associated with a political party and that each political party (through NGOs) focuses on

winning contracts of donor-funded projects to influence their development priorities and

constituencies. This political party influence was mentioned by two interviewees

(*Interview 10 and Interview 11*) who suggested that this hindered the program's smooth

operations:

> *Another underlying issue that one must understand is that in Nepal the
> NGO sector is highly politicized. This is a limitation in many ways as there
> is party politics at play. It is unfortunate that almost all NGOs and their
> political affiliation is known. The general understanding is that all NGOs
> are United Marxist Leninist (UML) supporters.*
>
> *Now let's look at an example. There existed serious differences even
> within the Senior policy makers and Senior bureaucrats. There was a
> general understanding that the design phase was more aligned along the
> UML lines. And therefore, those bureaucrats who were not in favor of
> UML, deliberately tried to stop the program activities or not provide any
> support to it. Such play of party politics even at the senior policy making*

level caused significant delays in key outputs such as Revision of Forest Policy, and Forest Strategy. (Interview 10)

These concerns about the influence of mainstream politics in the MSFP were mentioned by other stakeholders too mainly in the informal talks after the interviews and in other informal conversations with stakeholders and program staff. This illustrates that rather than a de-politicized development initiative, the MSFP was in fact a political force that contributed significantly to and was affected by the ongoing social and political transformation in Nepal. As Jasanoff (2015b) suggests from the lens of imaginaries, politics is a space in which socio-technical imaginaries originate and flourish. After all, to imagine a collective future and an alternative to the status quo is a political act.

Further, the MSFP also gives useful insights into how power operates in policy level collaborations. As informed above, this is a multi-dimensional view of power that is perceived to be visible on the surface as overt influences like funding or expertise; or power may be more subtly engaged to frame agendas and/or generate discourses. Ran & Qi (2018) suggest that in collaborative governance, power keeps changing hands and that collaboration can be cultivated and function well in situations of apparent power asymmetry if it is accepted socially as reasonable. Purdy (2016) theorizes three sources

of power in collaboratives that includes authority, resource, and discursive legitimacy. Following this conceptualization of the sources of power, in the MSFP the donors held resource power (funding) with which they controlled the processes such as condition of inclusion and deliberation in the Steering Committee, the government officials held power of authority that shaped beliefs about who was deserving of a position on the steering committee, who participated, and/or whose voice got heard. And finally, the discursive power was held by the civil society that was based upon the logic, values, and discourses it represented. What is evident from this case is that these sources of power continuously contest to exert power and to negotiate power arrangements. The National Forest Entity (NFE) case displays how the national political dynamics influenced an increase in support toward the NFE opposition group, thereby making them more powerful over time although they were initially only minority views. As informed by the interviewees, the institution agenda and support or opposition to its creation was a power struggle between the two key actors, the donors and the government officials (Interviews 4, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, and 18). The MTR (2015) confirms the interviewees' views and adds that the Ministry officials did not take the NFE agenda seriously because a few high-level government officials suspected that such establishment could undermine their power and authority in the sector. Thus, politics influenced who held power (and of what type) and

power influenced who was invested, how, why, and in what manner in achieving those

goals. As noted by a senior program staff,

> *Just engaging stakeholders is not enough. A key part is to analyze what are their core interest, expectations, needs and interests. This will help understand the purpose of their involvement and whether they are participating for genuine collaboration or for other vested interest. (Interview 16)*

This reflection hints that perhaps in the MSFP, the act of participation was an issue of

power and politics. This case adds to the scholarly argument that resource governance is

one of the key sites where issues related to power and politics are manifested, contested,

and determined. And that support or opposition to any development vision relates to

questions of power and politics that cannot be managed only with good institutional

design.

6.3   Understanding the value of time as a factor in collaboration

In analyzing the reasons for the MSFP collapse, it may be a disservice to the stakeholders

and their investment in the process if the time factor is not taken into account. Many

interviewees (*Interviews 10, 14, 16, 17, 18*) reflected that there was limited time

envisioned and allotted for the collaboration process to unfold and show results.

Collaboration is a process-oriented mechanism as it is based on trust and relationship

building (Ansell and Gash, 2008). In addition, a collective imaginary is not static. Powerful visions spread through time and space, facing resistance, adjusting to the specific socio-political context while influencing these contexts (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). Thus, co-production is a continuous process. The MSFP aimed to deliver ambitious results of collaborative governance in a relatively short span. And while this paper discussed many elements that played key roles in its early collapse, perhaps the time variable was not recognized for its impact on the outcome. This is mainly because the interviewees mentioned this only in passing. This could be because it was essentially a reflection of the past and issues of conflict between parties or issues of leadership may have had a deeper impression in their memories. Secondly, since the time frame was bounded at the very beginning as a part of the funding agreement (JFA, 2012), they understood the timeline as a given and not a flexible condition.

7. CONCLUSION

The MSFP was designed to succeed as it was well aligned with the emerging international development agendas as guided by the millennium development goals and the aid dissemination modalities under the 2005 Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness. However, it failed to deliver on its goals. While there are several factors that contributed to this early termination, the framework of collaborative governance (CG) and the framework of socio-technical imaginary (STI) distill out a few key constraints and challenges. At the program level, the application of the CG framework suggests that the lack of leadership, mainly from government officials, as well as inability of the program leadership to generate political leadership were the main constraining factors for achieving the desired goal of stakeholder ownership. The issue of ownership was mainly centered around the formation of a new institution that was set as the benchmark for transition to the second phase of the initiative. The donors used that failure to fulfill the benchmark as an explanation to withdraw funding support. Thus, the MSFP terminated before transitioning into the second phase.

This explanation is perhaps the most straight forward one of the many possible explanations for the outcome. However, it does not adequately capture stakeholders'

many other concerns including issues related to power struggles between the powerful actors, concerns about disparity in capacities for collaboration, and/or alternative framings of priorities, risks and benefits within evolving social and political systems. For this, the lens of socio-technical imaginary provides a sound analytical basis to examine system level events such as changes in the socio-political relations and societal aspirations that alter previously adopted visions and selected pathways of even the best-planned projects. Further, this analysis also contributes to the scholarly debates on issues related to power and politics in development thinking and on the normative positioning of development as a technical matter that is viewed as isolated from political demands and relationships.

The case study demonstrates that the MSFP was a platform where contestations were not just limited to forestry-governance issues but expanded and mired in broader national-level political struggles of meaning-making of concepts such as authority, inclusion, representation, collaboration, etc. And therefore, even though the MSFP collapsed prematurely, not all was lost. The STI framework theorizes that an imaginary is not static, and that powerful visions, desires, and practices spread through time and space, adjusting to the specific social and political context while influencing these very

contexts (Jasanoff and Kim, 2015). The imaginary of a multi stakeholder mechanism in the policy process survived the collapse of the MSFP and continues to embed into the socio-political culture in Nepal's forestry sector. The is reflected in the stakeholders' ongoing demands to make policy processes more inclusive and the Ministry's response of wider stakeholder engagement in new policies and strategies related to forestry governance as seen in the REDD+ strategy preparation process.

Additionally, what this case illustrates is that the natural environment, material infrastructures, technological possibilities, policy provisions, and societal objectives are continuously interacting with each other and that these elements are at once the product of and instruments of knowledge, power, and society.

In conclusion, there is no single or comprehensive narrative of why the MSFP failed. But this study does offer some compelling explanations from the perspective of stakeholders who experienced the issues, challenges, and opportunities that emerged in steering of the program at the national level. While this case study confirms the importance of antecedent conditions for collaborative performance such as leadership and trust, it urges policy makers and practitioners to re-think whether a funding commitment is sufficient

to generate country-ownership. The study also suggests reassessing the technocratic solutions of aid-giving by highlighting that institutional reform (and transfer of good institutional models) is perhaps a place to start development-thinking but will have little impact if these institutional mechanisms do not respond to the country's socio-political dynamics and evolve in that changing context.

7.1   Study Limitations

This report analyzed the breadth of perspectives and experiences of the MSFP stakeholders regarding the multi-stakeholder institutional processes at the national level. I studied the collaborative processes at the high level multi stakeholder steering committee that was entrusted with approving MSFP plans and providing strategic direction to the program. However, the MSFP supported the development of multi stakeholder processes at the district, village, and community level as well. While this study is limited only to the national level, I do recognize that covering perspectives of participants at different levels of collaborative mechanisms would have generated a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced in the program. But as a single researcher I was constrained with limited time, limited funding, and wide distribution (also remote) of sites at the district and local level. I recommend future research to understand how

multi stakeholder mechanisms implemented at different levels performed, interacted, and contributed (or not) to the national multi stakeholder processes and to the early program termination. This is a study in its own right and will provide valuable insights into the challenges of collaboration at different levels of governance.

8. POLICY RECCOMENDATIONS

8.1 Responding and adapting to changing contexts

MSFP experimented with an ambitious new approach of multi stakeholder collaboration for program governance in a politically complex situation. It introduced many new aspects in donor-funded program management such as moving away from the bilateral project approach to a harmonized country-wide program delivered by national organizations in a multi stakeholder approach at multiple levels of governance. And, it set up the first national level multiple stakeholder steering committee for a large forestry program. Given the novelty in its approach it was sensible for the program designers to plan an initial phase of four years and an implementation phase of six years. However, one serious gap in the program was the lack of adaptive capacity of the program management in the rapidly changing Nepali context. As this case illustrates, collaboration is influenced not only by elements within the process but also by factors external to the dynamics of collaboration such as a fluid and dynamic political context, changes in stakeholder positions and loyalties, unexpected setbacks and delays in program activities etc. By focusing heavily on predetermined benchmarks, the MSFP missed out on opportunities to learn from incremental progresses and small wins. This study suggests that the MSFP could have benefited if it had used an adaptive program management approach to policy

development and recommends adopting such an approach of learning, innovating, and practicing especially for programs that take an ambitious and new pathway for development.

8.2   Recognizing time investment needed for collaborative processes

This study draws attention to the time intensive process of collaboration. Collaborative governance is a process-oriented approach, and in the MSFP, many stakeholders expressed their dissatisfaction about the pressure of translating actions into immediately tangible and measurable results. This was mainly raised by the program implementers who complained about the lack of realistic plans of action. For instance, on the one hand they were getting trained in capacities to improve program management and, on the other hand, they were also being audited on their program management performance simultaneously; they were also facing intense administrative pressures related to fund disbursement. In other words, there was no time envisioned in the plan for absorption and improvement of capacity and skills, as focus was solely on pre-determined results and outcomes.

While programs need schedules in order to retain funding commitment and to use as a reference point for the evaluation of targets versus achievements, this study recommends some flexibility and adjustments to tight (predetermined) timelines in complex new programs such as the MSFP that aimed to build new relationships and implement new approaches to development.

8.3   Paying attention to the diverse collaboration capacities

Several stakeholders noted that the platform created by the MSFP, particularly the multiple stakeholder steering committee to approve program plans and support in the policy process, was a big step toward inclusion and representation in the forestry sector. However, they suggested that the program didn't recognize that many stakeholders had different capacities to participate (or not) in the collaborative process. As one interviewee noted "We know the results if we shove in tiger and goats in the same cage. The outcome will be same if stakeholders are simply put in together to collaborate without ensuring a level playing field among the participants" (Interview 14). With varied levels of experience and skills to collaborate at a policy level forum, several stakeholders admitted that they didn't feel equipped to participate meaningfully in the process. Based on this finding, the study recommends investing in institutional as well as individual capacity building of

representatives in high-level policy forums so that they can better represent their constituencies.

This limitation in the program planning is also reflected in the integrated framework of collaborative governance. The collaborative dynamics section of the framework does not adequately capture the above-mentioned differences in individuals' capacities to collaborate. Therefore, the study recommends including an additional element "collaboration readiness" in the joint capacity component of the framework to encompass all aspects of collaboration challenges and opportunities. This added component can be tested for robustness in future studies of collaborative processes.

8.4   Acknowledging the centrality of politics in the development process

This study draws from the critical analyses of Nightingale (2017) and Unsworth (2009), who argue that the mainstream development debates still view constraints for growth as primarily financial, technical, and managerial and tend to offer solutions that are focused on creating better institutions and policies. This research has demonstrated that political realities are entrenched in all aspects of development practice. Unsworth (2009, p. 885) claims that, "If the local political incentives are not well aligned with

donor agendas, the gap cannot be bridged by more effective aid partnerships, or capacity building." In this case, the rhetoric of country ownership and wider stakeholder engagement as principles for enhancing aid effectiveness under the Paris Declaration ignored the incentives that drove powerful interests and political structures embedded in the forestry sector in Nepal. Therefore, some well-meaning intentions could not be actualized during the initiative. This research recommends a thorough political economy analysis of the forestry sector at the country level in order to fully comprehend the issues, interests, stakes, power, and politics in the development process and to use it as the foundation for development plans and goals[7].

As an ambitious effort to bring high-level change to an important sector with critical economic and environmental impacts, the MSFP envisioned a program that engaged many stakeholders at several levels to reform the forestry sector in Nepal. Even while

---

[7] It may be important to note here that MSFP had commissioned a study along the similar lines and a report was published titled "The Political Economy of Forestry Sector of Nepal: Analysis of Actors' Engagement and Policy Processes" in 2014. However, as Unsworth (2009) argues that donors and the development community overall have long been aware of how politics interacts with development. However, all political analysis reports only end up having superficial impacts on donor policy. Politics continues to be given a passing nod in mainstream aid debates with discussions reserved for informal and after work conversations.

adopting key international development agendas on aid effectiveness, the project stumbled on what appear, at least in hindsight, to be commonsensical issues including inattention to participants' differential capacities, a rapidly changing political environment, and a rigid timeframe for producing results in a highly fluid socio-political context that contributed to the lack of national ownership of the program outcomes. It is studies like this one, that take a deep dive into examining what went wrong and why an ambitious project collapsed, that may help future international development initiatives plan for ways to address the increasingly complex problems facing communities in the 21st century.

REFERENCES

Agrawal, A. (2007). Forests, governance, and sustainability: Common property theory and its contributions. *International Journal of the Commons*, *1*(1), 111–136.

Agrawal, A., & Gibson, C. C. (1999). Enchantment and disenchantment: The role of community in natural resource conservation. *World Development*, *27*(4), 629–649.

Agrawal, A., & Ostrom, E. (2001). Collective action, property rights, and decentralization in resource use in India and Nepal. *Politics & Society*, *29*(4), 485–514.

Ahlborg, H., & Nightingale, A. J. (2018). Theorizing power in political ecology: The 'where' of power in resource governance projects. *Journal of Political Ecology*, *25*(1), 381–401.

Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *18*(4), 543–571.

Apodaca, C. (2017). Foreign aid as foreign policy tool. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics*.

Banerjee, A., & Duflo, E. (2011). *Poor economics: A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty*. Public Affairs.

Brett, E. (2016). Explaining aid (in) effectiveness: The political economy of aid relationships. *LSE International Development Working Paper Series, No. 16-176*.

Cameron, J. (1998). Development thought and discourse analysis: A case study of Nepal. *New Perspectives on India-Nepal Relations*.

Carter, J., Pokharel, B., & Parajuli, R. R. (2011). Two decades of community forestry in Nepal: What have we learned? *Two Decades of Community Forestry in Nepal: What Have We Learned?*

Cleaver, F. D., & Franks, T. R. (2005). *How institutions elude design: River basin management and sustainable livelihoods.*

Common Programme Document (ProDoc). (2011). Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme. Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Department for International Development, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Government of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Crawford, G. (2003). Partnership or power? Deconstructing the'partnership for governance reform'in Indonesia. *Third World Quarterly*, *24*(1), 139–159.

Daniels, S. E., & Walker, G. B. (2001). *Working through environmental conflict: The collaborative learning approach*.

Dasse, C. M. (2002). Adopting collaborative management programs. *International Journal of Economic Development*, *4*(3–4).

Diallo, A., & Thuillier, D. (2004). The success dimensions of international development projects: The perceptions of African project coordinators. *International Journal of Project Management*, *22*(1), 19–31.

Dutterer, A. D., & Margerum, R. D. (2015). The limitations of policy-level collaboration: A meta-analysis of CALFED. *Society & Natural Resources*, *28*(1), 21–37.

Easterly, W. R. (2006). The white man's burden: Why the West's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good. Penguin.

Ebrahim, A. (2004). Institutional preconditions to collaboration: Indian forest and irrigation policy in historical perspective. *Administration & Society*, *36*(2), 208–242.

Eckholm, E. (1976). *Losing ground: Environmental stress and food problems*. New York: WW Norton.

Emerson, K., Nabatchi, T., & Balogh, S. (2012). An integrative framework for collaborative governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *22*(1), 1–29.

European Commission (EC). (2007). Aid Delivery Methods: Guidelines on the Programming, Design & Management of General Budget Support. Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved on Nov 1, 2019 from https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/methodology-aid-delivery-methods-programming-design-general-budget-support-200701_en_2.pdf

European Commission (EC). (2011). Increasing the impact of EU Development policy: an agenda for change. Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved on Nov 1, 2019 from https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/agenda_for_change_en.pdf

Foucault, M. (1991). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*. University of Chicago Press.

Geertz, C. (2008). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The cultural geography reader* (pp. 41–51). Routledge.

Ghebreyesus, T. A. (2010). Achieving the health MDGs: Country ownership in four steps. *The Lancet*, *376*(9747), 1127–1128.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1999). *Theoretical sampling The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine publishing company.

Gotame, B. (2014). *Political Economy of Forestry Sector of Nepal: Analysis of Actors' Engagement and Policy Processes*. https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.4310.5284

Gulrajani, N. (2016). Bilateral versus multilateral aid channels: Strategic choices for donors. *ODI Report*.

Hajer, M. A. (1995). *The politics of environmental discourse: Ecological modernization and the policy process*. Clarendon Press Oxford.

Hajjar, R., & Oldekop, J. A. (2018). Research frontiers in community forest management. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, *32*, 119–125.

Hemmati, M., F. Dodds, J. Enayati and J. McHarry (2001). Multi-Stakeholder Processes: A methodoogical Framework UNED Forum, 3 Whitehall Court, London.

Hobley, M., & Malla, Y. (1996). From forests to forestry. The three ages of forestry in Nepal: Privatisation, nationalisation and populism. *Participatory Forestry: The Process of Change in India and Nepal*, 65–92.

Ika, L. A. (2012). Project management for development in Africa: Why projects are failing and what can be done about it. *Project Management Journal*, *43*(4), 27–41.

Jasanoff, S. (2004). *States of knowledge: The co-production of science and the social order*. Routledge.

Jasanoff, S. (2015a). Future imperfect: Science, technology, and the imaginations of modernity. *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, 1–47.

Jasanoff, S. (2015b). Imagined and invented worlds. *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, 321–342.

Jasanoff, S., & Kim, S.-H. (2009). Containing the atom: Sociotechnical imaginaries and nuclear power in the United States and South Korea. *Minerva*, *47*(2), 119.

Jasanoff, S., & Kim, S.-H. (2015). *Dreamscapes of modernity: Sociotechnical imaginaries and the fabrication of power*. University of Chicago Press.

Joint funding Agreement (JFA). (2012). Joint funding agreement between Government of Switzerland and Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and The Government of Nepal concerning Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme. Kathmandu, Nepal.

King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton university press.

Leach, W. D., & Pelkey, N. W. (2001). Making watershed partnerships work: A review of the empirical literature. *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*, *127*(6), 378–385.

Leach, W. D., & Sabatier, P. A. (2005). Are trust and social capital the keys to success? Watershed partnerships in California and Washington. *Swimming Upstream: Collaborative Approaches to Watershed Management*, 233–258.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). Sage.

Lofland, J., Snow, D. A., & Anderson, L. (n.d.). L. & Lofland, LH (2006). *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*.

Lubell, M. (2005). Do watershed partnerships enhance beliefs conducive to collective action. Swimming upstream: Collaborative approaches to watershed management, 201-32.

Lucas, R. E. (2005). *International migration and economic development: Lessons from low-income countries*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Luintel, H. (2006). Do Civil Society Organizations Promote Equity in Community Forestry? A Reflection from Nepal's Experiences. *Hanging on the Balance: Equity in Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Asia*, 122–142.

Margerum, R. D. (2008). A typology of collaboration efforts in environmental management. *Environmental Management*, *41*(4), 487–500.

Marsh, D., & Furlong, P. (2002). A skin not a sweater: Ontology and epistemology in political science. *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, *2*, 17–41.

Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, *2*, 214–253.

Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. Macmillan.

Mid term review of Nepal Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme (MTR). (2015). Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Kathmandu Nepal.

MSFP (2012a). Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme: Contributing to poverty reduction and tackling climate change. Briefing note. MSFP. Kathmandu, Nepal.

MSFP (2012b). Contributing to sustainable forest management, poverty reduction, and tackling climate change. Programme Brochure. MSFP. Kathmandu, Nepal.

Niblock, T. C. (1970). The politics of economic aid motives and objectives. *International Relations*, *3*(8), 550–564.

Nightingale, A. J. (2017). Power and politics in climate change adaptation efforts: Struggles over authority and recognition in the context of political instability. *Geoforum*, *84*, 11–20.

O'Brien, M. (2012). *Review of Collaborative Governance: Factors crucial to the internal workings of the the collaborative process. Published by The Ministry for the Environment* .

Overseas development institute (ODI). (2003). Multi-stakeholder partnerships. Issue paper. Retrieved on Sep 16, 2019 from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1741Multi-%20Stakeholder%20Partnerships.pdf

Ojha, H. R. (2006). Techno-bureaucratic doxa and challenges for deliberative governance: The case of community forestry policy and practice in Nepal. *Policy and Society*, *25*(2), 131–175.

Ojha, H. R. (2011). The evolution of institutions for multi-level governance of forest commons: The case of community forest user groups federation in Nepal. *Sustaining Commons: Sustaining Our Future*, *13*.

Ojha, H., Timsina, N., & Khanal, D. (2007). How are forest policy decisions made in Nepal. *Journal of Forest and Livelihood*, *6*(1), 1–16.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (n.d.). The Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness: five principles for smart aid. Retrieved on Nov 2, 2019 from https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45827300.pdf

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press.

Purdy, J. M. (2016). The role of power in collaborative governance. In *The Challenges of Collaboration in Environmental Governance*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Ran, B., & Qi, H. (2018). Contingencies of power sharing in collaborative governance. *The American Review of Public Administration*, *48*(8), 836–851.

Rankin, K. N., Nightingale, A. J., Hamal, P., & Sigdel, T. S. (2018). Roads of change: Political transition and state formation in Nepal's agrarian districts. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *45*(2), 280–299.

Raymond, L. (2006). Cooperation without trust: Overcoming collective action barriers to endangered species protection. *Policy Studies Journal*, *34*(1), 37–57.

Rondinelli, D. A. (1976). Why development projects fail. *Project Management Quarterly*.

Sabatier, P. A., Leach, W. D., Lubell, M., & Pelkey, N. W. (2005). Theoretical frameworks explaining partnership success. *Swimming Upstream: Collaborative Approaches to Watershed Management*, 173–200.

Sachs, J. (2006). The end of poverty. *The New York Times*.

Sachs, J. D. (2016). Toward an international migration regime. *American Economic Review*, *106*(5), 451–455.

Singler, S. W. (2017). Development Discourse and the "Conduct of Conduct:" Promoting Good Governance in Tanzania. *Inquiries Journal*, *9*(02). Retrieved from http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1525

Thomson, A. M., & Perry, J. L. (2006). Collaboration processes: Inside the black box. *Public Administration Review*, *66*, 20–32.

United Nations (UN). (2005). The Millennium Development Goals Report. New York. Retrieved on Nov 3, 2019 from https://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/pdf/MDG%20Book.pdf

United Nations (UN). (2013). Voluntary Commitments and Partnerships for Sustainable Development – Special Report of the SD in Action Newsletter. Department of Economic and Social Affairs: New York. Retrieved on Nov 2, 2019 from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/930Report%20on%20Voluntary%20Commitments%20and%20Partnerships.pdf

Unsworth, S. (2009). What's politics got to do with it?: Why donors find it so hard to come to terms with politics, and why this matters. *Journal of International Development: The Journal of the Development Studies Association*, *21*(6), 883–894.

Weber, E. P., & Khademian, A. M. (2008). Wicked problems, knowledge challenges, and collaborative capacity builders in network settings. *Public Administration Review*, *68*(2), 334–349.

Weber, E. P. (1999). The question of accountability in historical perspective: From Jackson to contemporary grassroots ecosystem management. *Administration & Society*, *31*(4), 451–494.

Weible, C., Sabatier, P. A., & Lubell, M. (2004). A comparison of a collaborative and top-down approach to the use of science in policy: Establishing marine protected areas in California. *Policy Studies Journal*, *32*(2), 187–207.

World Bank. (1992). Governance and Development. Washington D.C. 1992 Retrieved on November 4, 2019 from http://www.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/sotsubo/Governance_and_Development_1992.pdf

World Bank. (2018). Results and Performance of the World Bank Group 2 017. Independent Evaluation Group.Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved on Sep 10, 2019 from https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/Evaluation/files/rap2017.pdf#page=198

Wright, J., & Winters, M. (2010). The politics of effective foreign aid. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *13*.

Yin, R. (2009). Case Study Research: Design and Methods, SAGE Publications. *California, USA*.

APPENDICES

Appendix A : Interview Guide

	Major themes	Sample questions
1	Getting to know the respondent	Please tell me how you got involved with MSFP and in what capacity?
2	Understanding about the program	In your understanding, what were the main goals and the purpose of the MSFP? What did you and your constituency hope to achieve/deliver from participation in this multi stakeholder process?
3	Lessons learned – challenges and opportunities	Can you share some experiences of challenges you faced in the collaborative processes at the MSFP? Can you share some new opportunities that emerged from MSFP's collaborative process? What are the key lessons learned from this experience? Tell me something about partnerships? Who do/did you trust the most? Who do/did you not trust? Why?
4	What went wrong?	In your understanding, what went wrong in the MSFP? Why do you think the project terminated early?
5	Recommendations	If a new forestry program were to be designed, what would be your suggestions?

If you have any further information that you would like to share or discuss this topic further, please feel free to call me. Thank you again.

Appendix B : List of Interviewees

S No.	Stakeholder type	interview date (2018)	Interview length (minutes)
1	Government of Nepal - Joint Secretary	6-Feb	30
2	Government of Nepal – Under Secretary	22- Feb	30
3	Government of Nepal - Under Secretary	22-Feb	25
4	Government of Nepal -National Planning Commission	4-Feb	80
5	Representative from the Donors	15-Feb	40
6	Representative from the local government bodies	22-Feb	40
7	Representative from the Private Sector	2-Feb	35
8	Representative from the Private Sector	5-Feb	30
9	Representative from the Federation of Forest User Groups	11-Feb	30
10	Representative from the Program Implementing NGOs	30-Jan	40
11	Representative from the Civil Society (NGOs)	30-Jan	60
12	Representative from the Foresters' Association	1-Feb	45
13	Program Advisor	13-Feb	40
14	Representative from the Federation of NGOs	13-Mar	50
15	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit	14-Mar	30
16	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit	16-Jan	35
17	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit	18-Jan	60
18	Sr. Program Staff - Services Support Unit	17-Feb	30
	Average interview length		41

Appendix C : Key Program Documents Reviewed

Title of the document	Publication Date
Common Program Document (ProDoc)	December 2011
Joint Funding Agreement (JFA)	January 2012
Program Implementation Guideline	July 2012
MSFP Brochure	2012
MSFP Briefing note	July 2012
Terms of Reference of MSFP Steering Committee	July 2012

Reports/studies commissioned by the MSFP

Title of the document	Publication Date
Political Economy of forest sector in Nepal	July 2015
Mid-term review of Nepal MSFP (MTR)	August 2015
National Forest Entity (NFE) Report	August 2015
Innovations in forestry and livelihoods: Experiences from MSFP in inducing, documenting and scaling out good practices	October 2015
Strengthening governance of Nepal's forest sector following the multi stakeholder approach	April 2015
Results, Good practices and lessons learnt from MSFP	July 2016

Appendix C: Key Program Documents reviewed (Continued)

Multi Stakeholder Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

	Meeting Minutes of the MSFP Steering Committee	**Meeting Date**
1	Minutes of the 1st Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	28-Sep-2012
2	Minutes of the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	5-Mar-2013
3	Minutes of the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	15-Jul-2013
4	Minutes of the 4th Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	24-Jan-2014
5	Minutes of the 5th Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	11-Jul-2014
6	Minutes of the 6th Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	30-Jan-2015
7	Minutes of the 7th Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	15-Jul-2015
8	Minutes of the 8th Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	15-Sep-2015
9	Minutes of the 9th Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	18-Feb-2016
10	Minutes of the 10th Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	13-Jul-2016
11	Minutes of the 1st *Ad hoc* Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	24-Feb-2012
12	Minutes of the 2nd *Ad hoc* Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	29-Jun-2012
13	Minutes of the 3rd *Ad hoc* Steering Committee Meeting of MSFP	27-Jul-2012

Appendix D : Coding Scheme for the Integrative Framework for Collaboration Governance

Collaborative Dynamics: Factors operating at the program level

CODE	SUB-CODE	Description	Coding Examples from Interviews positive +/negative -
Principled Engagement	**Inclusion**	Perceptions of wider stakeholder (forestry sector relevant) engagement in the steering committee	*" This was the first time so many new stakeholders and organizations were interacting together with top government and donor officials. It was good." Coded as + Inclusion*
	Deliberation	Perceptions of the process as being deliberative i.e. receiving and exchanging of information, consensus-seeking, and having a voice in the decision process	*" In my experience, this was one of the most discussed, deliberated and debated forestry programs with opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the decision process." Coded as +Deliberation*
Shared Motivation	**Trust**	Participants find each other reasonable and dependable. Participants believe in capacity and skills of leadership and other members	*"…and this particular incident destroyed the trust level between actors" Coded as - Trust*
	Mutual Understanding	Participants understand and respect positions and interests even when one might not agree Participants have compatible	*"…There seemed to be conflict within the three donors and between the donors and the government." Coded as - Mutual Understanding*

		Interests [versus conflicting interest]	
	Internal Legitimacy	Participants find each other credible Participants view other participants as being important for the purpose of collaboration	*"I think the SC was just too big. How is it possible to manage a big group of 20-22 people? Why have such a big group? Any consensus was a challenge..." Coded as - Internal Legitimacy*
	Shared Commitment/ Vision	Participants agree on a shared set of goals and objectives Participants build a common understanding of program's aims and purposes	*"One problem could be that there was no common understanding of what an entity would be like and what would be its powers and role." Coded as - Shared Commitment*
Capacity for Joint Action	**Procedural & Institutional Arrangement**	Perceptions on the program procedures and mechanisms related to institutional set up, reporting systems, fund disbursements processes	*"The implementing partners had a dual role at the field delivery level. This was a limitation. For e.g. the local NGOs were being provided with capacity development support to improve their financial management and within the same period they were also being assessed for their financial capacity and program delivery. I believe the 'sequencing' of this was incorrect..." Coded as - Procedural & Institutional Arrangement*
	Leadership	Perceptions on strategic direction, mentoring, and guidance	*"... there was a problem of micro-management. This happens when the leaders themselves are not confident and clear of the plan of action" Coded as - leadership*

	Knowledge	Reflections on knowledge generated and shared in the process	*"I executed a plan to have all focal persons and area managers to sit together and discuss issues. This helped us develop a single unified voice of the ground implementers and promoted sharing of knowledge and lessons learned." Coded + Knowledge*
	Resources	Perceptions on resource availability, sharing, and leveraging. Resource include: Funding, time, technical backstopping, and skill transfer	*"...but considering the limited timeframe, the program was too ambitious." Coded - Resources*

Appendix E : Coding Scheme for the Framework of Socio-technical Imaginaries

Factors operating at the country or system level

Codes	Description	Sub-Codes	Examples from interviews and the meeting minutes
Origin	Who produced the knowledge that multi-stakeholder mechanism would transform and reform forestry governance in Nepal?	-Foreign experts -Local experts	*" A few of us working for different donors in Nepal started to brainstorm how we could make participatory governance a nation-wide program. Could we harmonize donor funds and develop a nation-wide program? This is where it all started."*
Embedding	Process of transforming ideas into imaginary. How did knowledge get translated into a collective desire?	-Making Institutions -Making Discourses -Past experience	*"Our role as donors is to support the Nepali actors in establishing the multi-stakeholder entity. It has to be owned by the Nepali stakeholders."*
Resistance	Moments of resistances, conflicts and contradictions to the idea or pathway chosen	-Conflicting interest -Ownership issues -Political Influence -Power issue	*"Even I don't agree that the concept of entity was practical at such a time of political turmoil and uncertainty in the country."*
Extension	How do imaginaries endure and diffuse?	-Capacity enhancement -New knowledge -Strengthened relationships	*"MSFP introduced the multi-stakeholder mechanism (MSM) and gave a taste of it to stakeholders through the steering committee membership. Now even the forest policy has recognized MSM as a valid approach for resource governance."*