Article

Inclusive Landscape Governance for Sustainable Development: Assessment Methodology and Lessons for Civil Society Organizations

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Abstract: Landscape governance refers to the combination of rules and decision-making processes of civic, private, and public actors with stakes in the landscape, that together shape the future of that landscape. As part of the Green Livelihoods Alliance, a program that supports civil society organizations (CSOs) to strengthen the governance of tropical forested landscapes, we developed and implemented a method that facilitates stakeholders to assess the status of governance in their own landscape and to identify options for improvement. In this article, we aim to reflect on landscape governance, based on our work within the Green Livelihoods Alliance. We present the method, summarize the results of its implementation, and draw practical lessons regarding the role of CSOs to improve landscape governance. We conducted workshops with stakeholders in 17 forested landscapes across 10 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. During each workshop, participants scored and discussed a set of governance indicators, developed a common vision for landscape governance, and identified the practical steps that would need to be taken to achieve that vision. Analyzing the results from the workshops, we found that landscape stakeholders tend to perceive that: opportunities to influence decision-making are unequal; integrated landscape planning efforts remain noncommittal; and implementation and enforcement of regulations is weak. To improve governance in the future, it is common to call for the development of multi-stakeholder processes, to allow different actors to discuss, negotiate, and develop collaborative action to address landscape-level challenges. CSOs can support such processes, by helping to develop a shared understanding of landscape governance, differences in interests, and possibilities for collaborative action. CSOs can also help stakeholders to develop multi-stakeholder procedures, and build trust and capacity among stakeholders to take an active role in such processes.

Keywords: landscape; governance; assessment; inclusive; sustainable; multi-stakeholder

1. Introduction

Climate change, food insecurity, poverty, biodiversity loss, and related threats to the well-being of people and planet are increasing the interest of policy makers, practitioners, and the private sector in landscape approaches, through which these challenges can be addressed in an integrated manner [1,2]. Landscape approaches usually promote multi-functionality in terms of agricultural, livelihood,

conservation, and climate objectives, and stress the need for iterative processes of understanding, negotiation, and decision-making among different stakeholders [3–5]. The emphasis on such processes corresponds with notions of cross-sectoral forms of environmental governance [6] and environmental policy integration [7]. Closely related is the concept of integrated landscape management, referring to actions designed to achieve multiple outcomes in the landscape, ultimately contributing to the holistic pursuit of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [8–10].

Landscape management is influenced by formal, semi-formal, and informal decision-making processes involving multiple actors in the landscape and beyond, whose interests do not always align [11–14]. Moreover, there is usually no single legal basis for decision-making at the landscape level, and policies at different spatial–administrative levels may be conflicting [15,16]. This is particularly the case when administrative boundaries are not in line with the socio-ecological processes of landscapes [17]. In the context of such challenges, attention for landscape governance has been growing [12,18]. As institutional and jurisdictional fragmentation is common, landscape governance is usually conceptualized as 'polycentric', involving multiple centers of decision-making [17,19–21].

The term landscape governance is frequently used by academics, practitioners, and policymakers alike, but its meaning is not always consistent. In scientific literature, landscape governance is primarily an analytic concept, drawing attention to the connections between natural places and socially constructed spaces [22]. As such, it is used to combine the lens of natural conditions of a place with the lenses of discourses and institutional practices [15,23].

Others have conceptualized landscape governance in a more applied sense. In their 2015 publication, Kozar et al., for example, draw on practical experience to synthesize 'what works' for landscape governance systems. According to them, landscape governance is "concerned with the institutional arrangements, decision-making processes, policy instruments and underlying values in the system by which multiple actors pursue their interests in sustainable food production, biodiversity and ecosystem service conservation and livelihood security in multifunctional landscapes." As such, landscape governance refers to the combination of decision-making processes of both state and non-state actors, which together shape the day-to-day practical actions of management. It stresses principles such as dialogue, negotiation, and the need to balance agricultural, conservation, livelihood, and climate objectives [12].

Civil society organizations (CSOs) can help make landscape governance more inclusive and sustainable, among others, by building capacity of local stakeholders to stand up for their rights and participate in decision-making processes, lobbying for policies to promote inclusion and sustainability, facilitating multi-stakeholder processes, and acting as watchdogs [24–26].

In this article we aim to reflect on landscape governance from a practical perspective, building on experiences of the Green Livelihoods Alliance (GLA), which is an international program that supports CSOs to contribute to inclusive and sustainable landscape governance. We describe how the GLA used the notion of landscape governance to develop assessment workshops as part of its monitoring and evaluation framework, and share practical lessons regarding the role of CSOs in strengthening landscape governance. We will address the following questions: What are the desirable characteristics of landscape governance? How can progress be measured? Additionally, how can CSOs help to improve landscape governance? First, we introduce a method that the GLA developed to assess changes in landscape governance. In Section 3, we present some of the main outcomes of assessments conducted in 14 landscapes, with examples from African landscapes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, and Uganda. Section 4 of the article builds on these findings, and reflects on the role that CSOs can play as convenors of multi-stakeholder processes, as a central component of inclusive landscape governance for sustainable development.

2. Methods

2.1. Background

The GLA is a partnership between the Dutch government, Tropenbos International, the Dutch national committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-NL), and Milieudefensie, and works with partner CSOs (i.e., organizations that partner with the Green Livelihoods Alliance) in 16 landscapes across 9 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The landscapes in the GLA program were selected based on their high forest cover and biodiversity, and their importance in delivering ecosystem services to local communities. In all landscapes, the provisioning of ecosystem services is under threat due to high deforestation rates, often driven by agricultural expansion, and unsustainable land management practices. The landscape selection was also informed by the working history and expertise of the GLA partners within the various countries.

A key assumption underlying the program is that achieving multifunctional landscapes (i.e., simultaneously achieving agricultural, livelihood, conservation, and climate objectives) requires that decision-making processes are inclusive—so they take multiple interests into account—and promote sustainability. It also assumes that that CSOs can play a crucial role in achieving this. The GLA has therefore been supporting CSOs to facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration, support the participation of smallholders and local communities in decision-making processes, and promote nature-based approaches to resource management, among others.

Within the framework of the GLA, Tropenbos International and EcoAgriculture Partners developed a landscape governance assessment methodology, as part of the GLA's approach to planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. We defined landscape governance as "the set of rules (policies and cultural norms) and the decision-making processes of public, private, and civic actors with stakes in the landscape, that affect actions in the landscape" and identified a set of criteria and indicators that capture the main elements of landscape governance to which the GLA aspires. [27]. We recognized that the objective and desired characteristics of governance differ between the GLA landscapes and between actors within these landscapes. That is why we aimed to identify a set of overarching characteristics of landscape governance, which were specific enough to be meaningful, and broad enough to allow for context-specific interpretation. To ensure that the methodology would be easy to apply and cost-effective, we worked towards a minimum set of criteria, which provide insights into the main governance characteristics without making the methodology unwieldy.

A core group of authors from both organizations identified these key characteristics of landscape governance in line with the GLA priorities and based on literature, experience, and knowledge within the respective organizations. These characteristics were then translated into four criteria for landscape governance, each with a set of indicators for the assessment. The criteria and indicators were reviewed and revised in workshops with researchers and practitioners. Following this first revision, we organized a pilot assessment workshop in the Cagayan de Oro landscape in the Philippines, based on which the list of criteria was refined again to create the final version of the method. This process resulted in four criteria and 18 associated indicators, as shown in Table 1.

2.2. Criteria and Indicators for Inclusive and Sustainable Landscape Governance

The first criterion is inclusive decision-making. Inclusive decision-making implies that all relevant actors, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, are able to influence decisions of public and private actors that determine how the landscape is being used and managed [13]. Often, however, decisions that influence the future of the landscape are dominated by the most powerful stakeholders. This can lead to decisions with negative effects on other groups, such as women, indigenous communities, recent migrants, and farmers with unclear land rights [21]. Decision-making processes therefore need to be designed and implemented in a way that ensures equitable and meaningful input from all stakeholders. It also requires transparency and accountability, to ensure

that representatives in decision-making processes can be held responsible for the resources, processes, and outcomes with which they are entrusted [25,28].

Table 1. Landscape governance assessment performance indicators.

Criterion	Indicator	Discussion Question
1. Inclusive decision-making	1.1 Transparency	How is information about rules and decision-making processes shared with stakeholders in the landscape?
	1.2 Participation	How are relevant stakeholders able to participate in decision-making that affects the landscape?
	1.3 Equity	How is influence in decision-making shared among stakeholders in the landscape?
	1.4 Accountability	What mechanisms are in place to ensure that public and private actors fulfil their duties and responsibilities to relevant stakeholders in the landscape?
2. Culture of collaboration in the landscape	2.1 Sense of community	What is the sense of community in the landscape?
	2.2 Knowledge-sharing and learning	How do stakeholders share knowledge and learn together in the landscape?
	2.3 Conflict resolution	How are conflicts among stakeholders addressed in the landscape?
	2.4 Resilience and innovation	How do stakeholders respond to change in the landscape (e.g., natural disasters, political instability, economic shocks)?
3. Coordination across landscape actors, sectors, and levels	3.1 Integrated landscape planning	How do stakeholders (e.g., government, civil society, private sector) coordinate across the landscape to identify synergies and opportunities for collaborative action?
	3.2 Horizontal coordination	How are rules, plans, and decision-making processes coordinated across local governments and government agencies at the landscape level?
	3.3 Vertical coordination	How are decision-making processes coordinated among local, regional, and national levels of government?
	3.4 Connectivity to national and international developments	How are stakeholders connected to national and international developments that affect the landscape?
	3.5 Coordination of customary and formal governance	How are the customary and government-led governance systems coordinated?
4. Decision-making for sustainability	4.1 Perceptions and knowledge of sustainability	How do stakeholders perceive and understand the concept of sustainable management and practices?
	4.2 Sustainable practices	To what extent do stakeholders implement sustainable practices in the landscape?
	4.3 The presence of enabling rules	How do policies and procedures promote landscape-friendly practices?
	4.4 Implementation and enforcement	How are sustainable policies and practices implemented and enforced, and how is their impact monitored?
	4.5 Promotion of sustainable practices	What conditions and incentives are in place to promote sustainable practices (e.g., subsidies, capacity strengthening, support for innovation)?

The second criterion is the existence of a culture of collaboration in the landscape, based on trust and connectedness among stakeholders. A culture of collaboration starts with a sense of community among actors, and awareness of how their actions and behaviors influence others in the landscape [1]. Based on this, stakeholders can decide to work together toward common goals, which stimulates information sharing and collaborative learning. Moreover, meaningful collaboration on immediate objectives will help to expand the trust that is needed for realizing more ambitious goals [5]. A culture of collaboration will further benefit from the existence of conflict resolution mechanisms that can effectively and fairly address conflicts when they arise, so they do not stand in the way of collaboration

in the future [18]. Finally, a culture of collaboration is expected to contribute to collective planning and action, fostering resilience and innovations that are needed to address complex challenges [18,29].

The third criterion is coordination between actors across sectors and levels. Better coordination is likely to help minimize trade-offs and maximize synergies between different interests in the landscape [12,30]. Coordination can be improved through the collaborative development of integrated planning frameworks. Moreover, coordination implies alignment of planning and decisions across technical sectors (e.g., agriculture, environment, rural development, water) and jurisdictional levels (local, regional, national, international). It may also require better coordination between customary and formal governance institutions [31].

The fourth and final criterion is decision-making for sustainability. Ideally, the decisions made by public, private, and civic actors promote practices that limit the degradation of forests, grasslands, soils, and waterbodies, and contribute to their restoration [32,33]. This requires adequate knowledge and awareness on the meaning and importance of sustainability, policies and regulations that directly promote sustainable practices, and the actual implementation and enforcement of these policies and regulations. Finally, there are other governance processes that could stimulate sustainable thinking and action in the landscape, such as access to support, capacity strengthening, and investments in innovation.

2.3. Assessing Landscape Governance in Participatory Workshops

Based on the set of criteria and indicators introduced above, we developed a landscape governance assessment method. It provides a simple and cost-effective tool to assess the status of landscape governance at different points in time, as part of the GLA's monitoring and evaluation framework. In addition, implementing the assessment provides an opportunity for landscape actors to discuss possibilities for improvement and plan for collaborative action, thus contributing to improved governance.

The method involves a two-day participatory workshop with stakeholders from the landscape. First, participants discuss how governance processes are currently organized in their landscape. The standard criteria and indicators are used as a discussion framework, but there is room to add additional criteria and indicators. This part of the workshop provides an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss (and learn about) the criteria and indicators, and to exchange knowledge and perspectives. Second, participants discuss what they would like to see change in the future, using the Rich Picture methodology [34]. Third, participants score the current performance of the governance of their landscape on all indicators. The scoring is done individually, using a straightforward 5-point Likert scale, from very poor (0) to very good (+5). After scoring, the results are presented and discussed. The final part of the workshop is then used to discuss what would need to be done in practical terms to move from the current situation to the desired situation. For a full description of the tool, see De Graaf et al. (2017) [27].

The method aims to create a shared understanding of how governance processes are organized in the landscape, but it is not meant to be prescriptive or to compare this to a predetermined standard. Instead it relies on the perceptions and ideas of the actors in the landscape, to make their own judgement on the quality of these governance processes. This approach helps to uncover differences in aspirations and the desired characteristics of landscape governance that may exist between various stakeholders. During the workshop, participants are actively encouraged to share their own knowledge and experiences with others. This increases the understanding of the governance system, provides insight in the different perspectives and interests, and shows the difficulties associated with prioritizing these different interests. Last, but not least, the workshop setting creates a space for participants to engage with others, which helps with developing a sense of community and trust.

In early 2017, staff from Tropenbos International and EcoAgriculture Partners trained 20 facilitators from GLA partner CSOs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America during a four-day workshop. The partner CSOs then implemented the method in the 17 GLA landscapes. Partner CSOs would invite between 20 and 40 participants for a two-day workshop, aiming for a balance between different stakeholder groups

and representation of a diversity of viewpoints. The list of invitees would include representatives of local communities and indigenous peoples, community-based organizations (e.g., women's groups, farmer associations and cooperatives), non-governmental organizations (e.g., rights-based organizations and conservation organizations), local governments, sectoral government agencies, small and medium enterprises, and corporations active in the landscape.

The workshop served to kick off discussions and collaborations between stakeholders within the program, while also serving as a base line assessment for monitoring and evaluation. After each workshop, the facilitators wrote a report, presenting the scores as well as qualitative descriptions of the discussions. In 2020, similar workshops will be conducted in the same landscapes, to assess whether and how landscape governance has changed over time. Table 2 presents the 14 landscapes for which the quantitative assessment data is available. Qualitative workshop reports were produced for all except the last two landscapes.

Table 2. Overview landscape assessments, implementing partners, and number of participants.

	Landscape	Partner	Participants
1	Suriname: Upper Suriname River	Tropenbos Suriname	23
2	Democratic Republic of the Congo: Bafwasende	Tropenbos DRC	20
3	Nigeria: Akamkpa	ERA	32
4	Uganda: Kalangala	NAPE	25
5	Viet Nam: Upper Srepok River Basin	Tropenbos Vietnam	23
6	Indonesia: Gunung Tarak (Kalimantan)	Tropenbos Indonesia	26
7	Indonesia: South Solok (Sumatra)	WARSI	30
8	Indonesia: Lariang Watershed (Sulawesi)	NTFP-EP	20
9	Philippines: General Nakar	NTFP-EP	24
10	Philippines: Northern Sierra Madre Nature Park	Mabuwaya Foundation	41
11	Philippines: Cagayan de Oro River Basin (Pilot)	Samdhana	38 (day 1) 27 (day 2)
12	Philippines: Upper Tagoloan River Basin	Forest Foundation Philippines	28
13	Philippines: Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (Palawan)	Forest Foundation Philippines	20
14	Philippines: Mt. Mantalingahan Protected Landscape (Palawan)	Forest Foundation Philippines	18

Assessments were also conducted in Ghana, Liberia, and Bolivia, but at the time of writing this data is not yet available.

3. Results

We reviewed the workshop reports for general patterns and lessons. We found that the indicators with the lowest mean scores generated the most insightful discussions about ways in which governance could be improved. The indicators with the lowest mean scores were: equity (Indicator 1.3); integrated landscape planning (Indicator 3.1); and implementation and enforcement (Indicator 4.4). Below we will address each of these indicators in some more detail, based on the qualitative descriptions of these indicators in the different landscapes.

3.1. Stakeholders Do Not Have Equal Opportunities to Influence Decision-Making

Inequality in decision-making is one of the biggest concerns among workshop participants in all landscapes. The influence of local communities and Indigenous Peoples on landscape-level decisions was often considered sub-optimal. Governments tend to be in control of important decisions in the landscape, such as the planning of infrastructural projects and the issuance of plantation,

logging, and mining permits. Some governments organize consultations, where landscape actors can comment on development plans. However, non-government participants would often point at the lack of procedures and mechanisms that allow for structural and meaningful participation in these planning processes. A common observation is that more powerful landscape actors, such as plantation companies, are better able to make use of opportunities to influence decision-making, because they have the necessary resources to participate, more access to information, and often have direct access to government officials. Further discussions also revealed bottlenecks at the community level. Participants in the Kalangala Landscape, Uganda, for example, mentioned that the district government had been inviting community representatives to participate in meetings, but that these seldom showed up, due to a lack of confidence to participate.

Participants also used the discussion on this indicator to point at inequalities between community members at the village level. In two-thirds of the workshop reports it is stressed that women are in a disadvantageous position, and lack representation in decision-making. Some reports further mention that village-level decision-making processes are dominated by village elites, and such intra-village inequalities (in terms of both decision-making power and wealth) are further exacerbated as soon as companies start offering material benefits to customary leaders and village elites, to win their support.

Across the board, CSOs are considered key actors to promote equality in decision-making. They may help create opportunities for marginalized groups to share their views or raise their voice, and invest in their capacity to do so. For example, CSOs may support representatives of marginalized groups to participate in multi-stakeholder workshops and meetings, helping them to voice their concerns and share these with other actors in the landscape. There are also CSOs that support marginalized groups to access justice in courts, while other CSOs help to organize local actors in formal structures (such as cooperatives, community-based enterprises, and women's groups), to give their voices more weight in political arenas. At the same time, it was stressed that the inclusion of marginalized groups can not depend on CSO support alone, and that governments should also take responsibility to strengthen capacities of marginalized groups and ensure their participation in decision-making.

3.2. Integrated Landscape Planning Efforts Remain Noncommittal

In many landscapes, stakeholders highlighted the need for better alignment and coordination of plans in the landscape. Sometimes there are efforts to improve coordination between stakeholders at the landscape level. In Uganda, for example, participants mentioned that CSOs occasionally organize coordination meetings, where stakeholders get together to discuss pressing issues. Despite such efforts, mistrust between stakeholders is common, and planning processes often lack transparency. In some cases, there had been integrated landscape planning initiatives, but these lacked synchronization with existing government planning processes. When push comes to shove, sectoral planning through mandated government agencies tends to override well-intended multi-stakeholder planning exercises.

Discussions also revealed that government representatives and other landscape actors may have different ideas about the meaning of 'coordination'. Government officials would present their efforts to create awareness about government plans as a form of coordination. Other stakeholders, however, would argue that such awareness programs are one-way traffic, with the government sending information to other actors. Overall, it is uncommon for governments to facilitate coordination between actors towards integrated landscape planning.

3.3. Weak Implementation and Enforcement of Regulations

In many landscapes, the regulations to promote sustainable land use and management exist. There is usually a range of government-devised prohibitions and requirements, such as a limitation to access forest reserves and national parks, a ban on hunting in certain periods of the year, a moratorium on plantations in peat areas, and reporting requirements for logging and sustainable forest management.

However, the implementation and enforcement of these regulations is generally considered inadequate. Indeed, the indicator 'implementation and enforcement' had the lowest score of all indicators.

A common perspective is that local governments do not have sufficient capacity and resources (and sometimes willingness) to implement and enforce government regulations. The lack of enforcement creates opportunities for other actors to circumvent the rules. In the Bafwasende landscape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, stakeholders stressed that regulations are established by legal texts, but in the field it is the 'law of the strongest' that prevails. The lack of adequate government monitoring was brought up in 11 out of 12 workshop reports. When government monitoring fails, CSOs may try to fill the gap, by monitoring illegal activities themselves, but public and private actors often ignore the results of CSO monitoring. Though watchdog CSOs have little or no power to enforce compliance themselves, they can use their monitoring results to raise attention in the media and mobilize communities to pressure other parties.

Corruption is mentioned as a major problem in half of all the landscapes. In the Kalangala landscape in Uganda, stakeholders argued that powerful individuals are able to influence policies, law enforcement, and the judicial system to their own advantage. Local government officials, who often stay in one area for a long time, establish personal relationships with businesses, and are therefore prone to corruption.

During the workshops, CSO and community representatives often stressed the importance of customary norms and rules. In the Akamkpa landscape in Nigeria, for example, parts of the forest cannot be used, because they are dedicated to spirits. Furthermore, eating of certain animals is considered taboo, according to local customs. Such customary regulations are not immune to implementation and enforcement challenges. Customary authorities may have their own enforcement systems in place, but these are increasingly challenged by outsiders and younger generations. This is because they are either not aware of them, or simply attach less value to customary practices and beliefs, such as the idea that nature will punish villagers when they violate customary rules.

3.4. Suggestions to Improve Landscape Governance

The last part of each workshop was used to discuss practical next steps to improve landscape governance. Three suggestions appeared common. The first is for the government to explicitly recognize traditional knowledge and rights, and to align government regulations with customary governance systems. In line with this, CSOs would need to invest in the capacity of traditional leaders, so they can effectively coordinate with government agencies.

Second, governments were urged to step up effort in support of sustainable practices, by investing in the monitoring and halting of illegal activities, implementing environmental impact assessments, developing incentives for sustainable enterprise development, and raising environmental awareness. Governments are also called upon to support the creation of a safe operational space for civil society organizations.

Third, 75% of the workshop reports suggest to invest in a multi-stakeholder mechanism, either by establishing a new institutional arrangement, or by strengthening an existing one. This is expected to contribute to all four criteria of inclusive landscape governance for sustainable development: enabling more active involvement of marginalized groups in discussions and negotiations with others; promoting information sharing and coordination between stakeholders; building trust and stimulating cooperation; and providing a place to discuss and initiate sustainable management.

4. Discussion

The objective of the GLA program is to strengthen the role of CSOs to contribute to inclusive landscape governance for sustainable development. The landscape governance assessments conducted at the start of the program helped to shed a light on the various perceptions on landscape governance processes, and the desired changes in the future. Discussing ways to improve governance, workshop

participants often would stress the need for some kind of multi-stakeholder process, to bring stakeholders together to discuss, negotiate, and develop common solutions to challenges in the landscape.

This is in concordance with literature on landscape approaches and integrated landscape initiatives, which stress the importance of multi-stakeholder arrangements, enabling processes of negotiation, learning, and adaptation between diverse stakeholders across scales, sectors, and knowledge systems [2–5,35]. Efforts to implement a landscape approach often aim to develop or strengthen institutional arrangements for multi-stakeholder processes, for example in the form of platforms, coalitions, forums, partnerships, and co-management boards. These are spaces where public, private, and civil society actors can discuss their respective agendas, and collaboratively identify options to balance the various interests that exist in the landscape [12,36,37]. Failure to develop a common agenda, and effectively engage different stakeholders is seen as a main cause of poor performance of landscape approaches [2,38].

In line with the above, several GLA partner CSOs took on the role of convening multi-stakeholder processes in their landscapes, providing opportunities for stakeholders to share ideas, identify common principles, and develop collaborative action. This has been a process of trial and error. Below we highlight general lessons related to the role of CSOs in convening multi-stakeholder processes to strengthen landscape governance, based on our own experiences in the GLA program and discussions with GLA partners.

4.1. Build Capacity and Trust First

Convening organizations will need to consider carefully whether the necessary conditions for effective and inclusive multi-stakeholder processes are in place. Two of the most important conditions are trust and capacity among actors in the landscape. When the level of trust is low, stakeholders may not even want to sit at the same table, for example because they are intimidated by other actors, or skeptical of their intentions. Moreover, marginalized groups may neither have the capacity nor the confidence to meaningfully engage in discussions and negotiations with other stakeholders. In such cases, it is necessary to first focus efforts on improving trust between stakeholders, and building the capacity of weaker actors, for example by helping smallholders and indigenous communities to organize themselves, access relevant information, learn about their rights, and develop negotiation skills.

4.2. Provide Clarity about Goals and Expectations

Multi-stakeholder processes have high opportunity and transaction costs for all involved [39], and stakeholders are more likely to engage if they expect that the long-term rewards will outweigh the costs, be it monetary or otherwise [2]. CSOs that convene multi-stakeholder processes will therefore need to be explicit about goals. The identification of a concrete challenge that connects the various stakeholders can act as a common agenda. After a short- or medium-term goal has been determined, the convenor will have to define the expected outcomes as clearly and realistically as possible, and communicate this with stakeholders. It should also provide clarity about responsibilities, timeframes, mandates, and the ability of the convenor to be engaged in follow-up activities. This is important to convince actors to participate in the process, as well as to prevent unrealistic expectations. The convenor will have to find a balance between defining a context-specific objective and expectations at the onset, while at the same time ensuring flexibility, so that stakeholders can adjust objectives over time.

4.3. Engage the Private Sector

In many landscapes private companies are main drivers of change, but they are often reluctant to engage in multi-stakeholder processes. Our experience with organizing the landscape governance assessment workshops serves as a case in point; private companies were not interested to participate, because they did not see how it could work in their advantage. To ensure private sector participation, convening organizations will need to proactively look for frontrunning companies, and develop a business case for their engagement. Some of the elements of the business case may be related

to the company's need to mitigate the risks of conflicts with communities, reputational damage, and decreasing long-term supply in the face of climate change and environmental degradation [40,41].

4.4. Connect to Policy Processes

The extent to which a multi-stakeholder process results in policy changes depends on the way it is connected to local government agencies that are in charge of spatial planning and the development of land-use rules and regulations at the landscape level. CSOs may connect to these agencies by convening multi-stakeholder processes that provide direct input into ongoing policy debates and decision-making (e.g., the development or revision of a spatial plan), and by actively engaging senior government officials in these processes [42]. Alternatively, rather than taking on the role of convenor, a CSO can assist a local government agency to adopt and incorporate multi-stakeholder processes in its modus operandi. This is likely to require changes in government procedures as well as attitudes. CSOs can help with building capacity and willingness within a local government to adjust its role from authority to facilitator, guiding bottom-up processes, and opening up decision-making procedures for other stakeholders.

4.5. Be Explicit about Interests and Values

Landscape actors do not only have different interests, they may also have different values. To enable constructive discussions, convening organizations can help to create openness about stakeholders' values and intentions—including their own. These are not always explicit. Sometimes a CSO or a research institute functions as a bridging or boundary organization, which implies it does not have a clearly defined local objective. Instead, they support dialogue among stakeholders, aiming to contribute to the joint identification of challenges, mediating conflicts, and discussing solutions [18,43–45]. Such boundary organizations are seen as impartial by the other stakeholders, but they are not necessarily value neutral, as they often try to link local interests to global objectives, e.g., concerning climate change and biodiversity [46].

4.6. Consider the Limitations of Interventions Establishing New Arrangements

Multi-stakeholder processes are en vogue. As part of donor-funded landscape-level projects and programs, CSOs are increasingly expected to convene multi-stakeholder processes. This is often operationalized through the establishment of a new institutional arrangement, such as a platform or a management board, where landscape actors can meet on a regular basis. It may raise complex questions concerning participation (who is invited? who shows up?) and representation (who represents who? are representatives accountable?). Furthermore, there is a risk that the institutional arrangement becomes a goal in itself—a box-ticking exercise to satisfy donor demands. Making sure that such an arrangement continues operating after donor support falls away requires firm embeddedness with an institutional host and continued facilitation [47]. We argue that efforts to strengthen landscape governance need to build on what is already there, strengthening existing forms of collaboration and coordination in the landscape. This ensures embeddedness and local ownership. Emphasis should be on increasing the possibilities for local stakeholders to play a role in ongoing governance processes, by building trust and capacity, including understanding of governance processes. This demands a flexible and adaptive role of the convening organization, which is harder to plan for, and does not fit in well with more rigid project cycles.

5. Conclusions

Based on landscape governance assessments in landscapes across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we conclude that landscape stakeholders often do not have equal opportunities to influence decision-making, that integrated landscape planning efforts tend to remain noncommittal, and that implementation and enforcement of regulations is often weak. We also found that multi-stakeholder processes are widely considered key to achieving inclusive landscape governance for sustainable

development. They are expected to help align and integrate planning and decision-making processes of different actors.

Such multi-stakeholder processes can take many shapes and forms. In the context of donor-funded projects—requiring clearly defined activities, outputs, and outcomes—a CSO may decide to design, initiate, and facilitate a multi-stakeholder process through a new institutional arrangement. Such arrangements mean to provide a space where stakeholders can meet periodically to discuss, negotiate, and plan for collaborative action.

However, such new multi-stakeholder arrangements initiated by outside actors may face various challenges, such as the lack of a clear local mandate and insufficient embeddedness in the existing governance system. Moreover, landscapes tend to be contested spaces, with large differences in interests between various actors. In this context, it would be naïve to assume that bringing stakeholders together in a new institutional arrangement will bring the result of collaborative action to address landscape-level challenges.

In practice, a landscape governance system is a complex and fluid web of rules and decision-making processes, which is influenced by the distribution of power and the ability of stakeholders to defend their own interests. Furthermore, although a governance system encompasses public, private, and civic actors, its outcomes will largely depend on the presence of an effective (local) government that is accountable to its citizens, has the legitimacy to make decisions, and has the legal backing and capacity to enforce rules and regulations.

In any effort to strengthen landscape governance, we stress the need to understand and build on what exists, and work with landscape actors to improve existing processes in the landscape. We believe there is a role for CSOs to support landscape actors to develop procedures for discussing and negotiating within their landscape, and to strengthen the capacity of local governments to ensure meaningful input from all stakeholders in landscape decisions. Next to that, CSOs can work with different constellations of landscape stakeholders to help develop a shared understanding of developments, threats, underlying causes, governance processes, and possibilities for collaborative action. Similarly, they can facilitate valuable monitoring and evaluation systems for tracking the effects of agreed action agendas in the landscapes including the strengthening of governance. CSOs can also increase trust, strengthen weaker stakeholders, and create capacity, interest, and enthusiasm of stakeholders to take up their own role in landscape governance.

The method presented in this paper can be used in its current or adapted form for practical applications as part of integrated landscape initiatives. It could also be used in action-research settings, informing the implementation of interventions, while gathering data on (changes to) perceptions on landscape governance. However, assessment scores gathered in participatory workshops should not be treated as hard data, as their quality and comparability depend on the composition of the group of participants, the participants' understanding of the indicators, and, related to that, the quality of facilitation. Despite such limitations, we hope that CSOs as well as action researchers will build on the method presented in this article to further support landscape stakeholders, ultimately contributing to inclusive landscape governance for sustainable development.

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