Landscapes in Practice

Stakeholder Identification and Analysis for ILM

A guide for landscape champions

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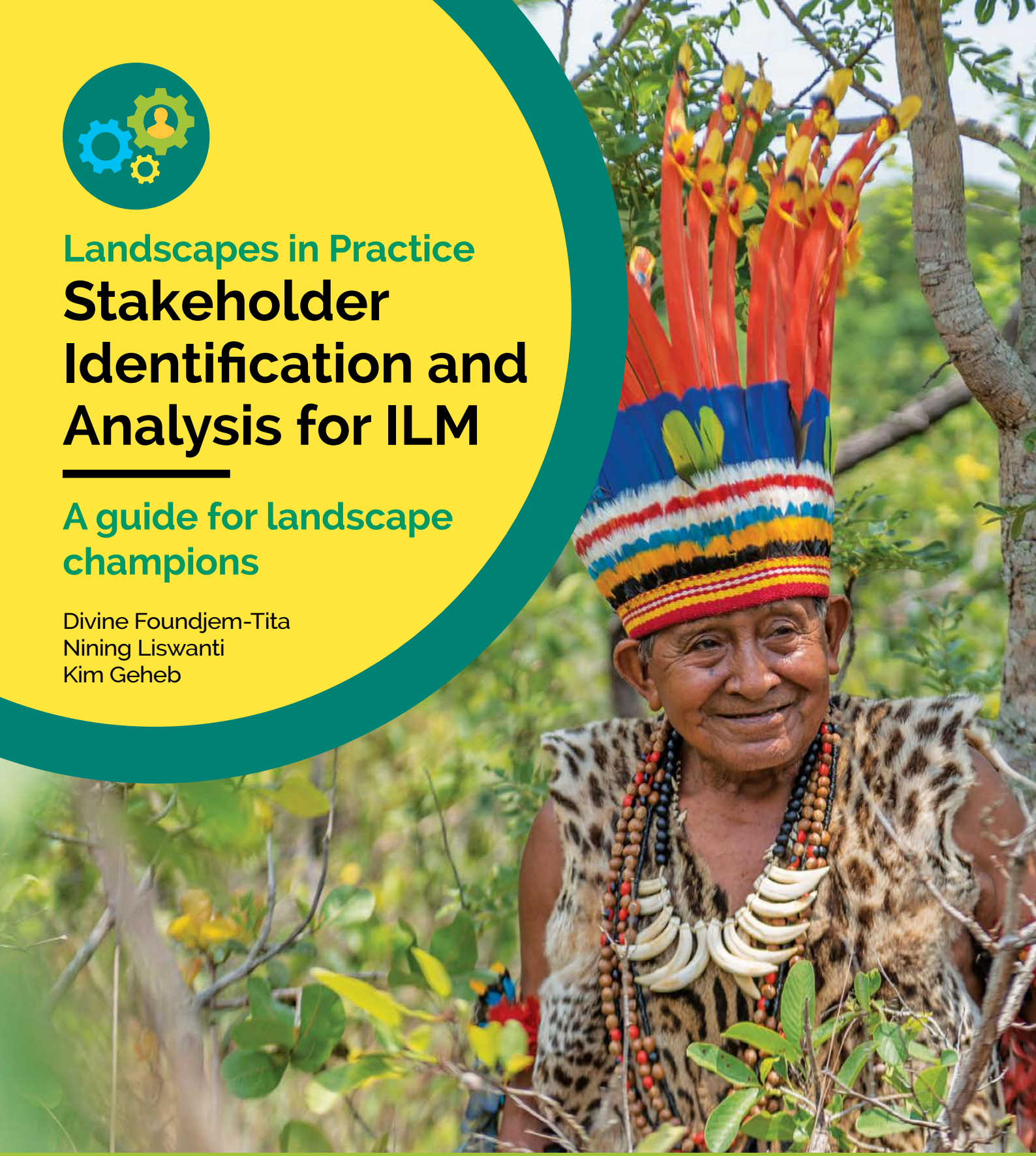

Landscapes in Practice is a series of practitioner guides to facilitate implementation of landscape approaches. The series is supported by the European Union's Landscapes For Our Future programme, which supports 22 projects across >30 countries in the Global South, proposing Integrated Landscape Management as a process for fostering co-created sustainability and resilience in landscapes through adaptive, inclusive and integrating strategies.
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Key Messages

- Stakeholder engagement is a precondition to Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) success. The higher the level of engagement, the greater the likelihood of success and sustainability.
- Stakeholder identification and analysis is complicated by diversity amongst stakeholders, which emerges from variable interests, different types of knowledge, and contexts. Most stakeholder engagement, identification and analysis approaches try to reveal and understand this complexity.
- Stakeholder analysis is strategic. It allows interventions to determine who they should engage with to succeed and which inter-stakeholder relations should be targeted for attention.
- The 'strategic relevance' of stakeholders is determined by the degree to which they are judged to influence a project's success.
- There are usually competing or contradictory interests among stakeholders, often expressed as conflict. The presence of conflict amongst stakeholders should be assumed from the outset and can represent a significant risk to intervention success.
- The strategies used to engage with (and between) stakeholders will reflect their strategic relevance and can be brainstormed and deliberated through the development of a Theory of Change.
- Engaging with stakeholders calls for the deployment of 'soft-skills' such as mediation, facilitation, convening and negotiation.
- Stakeholder relevance and relations will change over the course of a project intervention. As such, stakeholder analysis is not restricted to the beginning of an initiative, but is necessary throughout its duration.

Why are stakeholders important to ILM?

Landscape condition and sustainability depends on what its stakeholders are doing. ILM practitioners cannot, therefore, avoid considering stakeholder activities. The problems exhibited in landscapes emerge out of these activities, so implementing processes that change stakeholder behaviours and practices is central to ILM considerations. It is generally accepted that the higher the level of stakeholder engagement, the more likely an intervention is to succeed, and the more likely its effects will be sustainable.

Landscapes, it should be noted, are complex – and stakeholders are a source of much of this complexity because of their multiple, and often divergent, needs and interests (i.e., to exploit or conserve resources), rights (formal and customary) and levels of legitimacy, dependence on resources, power and influence (economic and political), knowledge, preferences and values. Stakeholders often have competing goals that require mediation to balance trade-offs (if an initiative is promoting changed behaviour) and are embedded within social networks, interactions and responses. If landscapes are to be managed in integrated ways, stakeholders and their various interests must be a major consideration in the design of ILM interventions.

What is stakeholder engagement?

Natural resources– or landscape management is increasingly recognized as a collective problem. Engagement with and across stakeholders is necessary for solving natural resources management dilemmas.

Stakeholder engagement is the process by which those who have a stake in a given territory or landscape are identified and their interest and objectives understood via consultations and/or participatory exercises. It can also be defined as the process whereby stakeholders are invited to participate in planning and decision-making to integrate their knowledge and values with the purpose of a particular project.[1] The first step in the process of stakeholder engagement is stakeholder identification.

Who are stakeholders?

Stakeholders can be defined as individual people, groups, institutions or organizations with *strategic relevance* to an ILM intervention. Stakeholders may include those who use/depend on a landscape's resources, hold legal or customary rights to resources (and are seen to be legitimate by other actors), and have jurisdiction, authority or responsibility over landscape, population or resources. They may be located in the landscape or beyond it, for example, global or government actors in distant national capitals.

Strategic relevance references the extent to which a stakeholder may affect an intervention's success – they may be deemed critical to achieving this, or they may get in the way of it. It also references the extent to which stakeholders will be positively or negatively affected by the intervention.

Stakeholders include people who may be affected by the decisions an intervention makes or can influence the implementation of its decisions. They may support or oppose these, be influential in the intervention or within target communities, or hold relevant official positions.

- **Good relations** necessarily foster cooperation and, potentially, collaboration. These may arise when cooperation/collaboration provides clear benefits (e.g., rights, monetary/economic incentives, security), clear rules for decision-making processes, and recognition of rights/needs within the system. Trusted mediators or brokers, who can manage disputes or provide recourse for perceived injustice or inequality, may also support engagement activities.
- **Poor relations** between stakeholders can represent a considerable risk to an intervention's ambitions. Relations can change over time and require close monitoring so that, if relations deteriorate, these can be addressed. Disagreements may highlight issues that need to be addressed – but this may not be possible. Where the relations are so bad that they devolve into armed conflict, it may not be possible for the intervention to occur.

Where stakeholders have high relevance to an ILM intervention's ambition, their characteristics (including interests) should feed into the design of the intervention's approaches and strategies, such as its Theory of Change (see below). Stakeholders with high relevance will also be the pool from which individuals and group representatives can be drawn to populate Multi-stakeholder Fora (MSFs).

It is also important to remember that, once an intervention commences, the implementing team's members are also stakeholders with a very high vested interest in intervention success.

Landscapes will usually have a wide diversity of stakeholders, for example, local heterogeneous community groups, sub-national, national and regional government, civil society organizations, academia, (inter)national research organizations, private sector organizations, and development organizations. Not all stakeholders in a particular group will necessarily share the same concerns or have unified opinions or priorities. This diversity will be revealed in multiple areas, including:

Interests

We understand 'interest' to be the degree to which a stakeholder's purpose or ambition is aligned with that of the intervention. Stakeholder interests will vary considerably. For example, the interests of a large mining corporation (seeking to maximize profits) will differ from government authorities managing a national park (seeking minimal damage and conservation), both of which will differ from local communities of nomads or agriculturalists (seeking to maximize their livelihoods). The differences in interests will often be a source of conflict and it should be assumed from the outset that conflictual relations between stakeholder groups are more likely to characterize inter-stakeholder relations, rather than mutual trust and collaboration. Analyzing and mapping stakeholders' interests can help clarify their motivations and how they engage with a landscape.

Differences in stakeholder interests, and conflictual relations amongst them, mean that one of the most important considerations in stakeholder engagement (and intervention design) is the kinds of skill sets needed to facilitate and enable cooperation (and possibly even collaboration) amongst stakeholder groups. Of particular relevance are 'soft skills' – such as facilitation, negotiation, mediation, etc. The convening power of the intervention must also be considered.

Stakeholder power and influence

Power is fundamental to stakeholders in a landscape. In all landscapes, groups of powerful actors will seek to impose their interests on and over landscapes. While other (less powerful) interests exist, these may not (or only marginally) affect dominant landscape trends.

In addition, stakeholder groups will exhibit their own internal power dynamics and will have their own perceptions of how powerful they are relative to other stakeholders. Power is a key variable in understanding the dynamic relations between stakeholders.

Cumulatively, power distributed across a landscape will affect an ILM intervention, how it is implemented, and the results that may emerge from it. This means that power cannot be ignored and should be incorporated into stakeholder analysis from the outset.

'Power' may be defined in a variety of ways. Definitions include those that reference the potential to wield force; for others, power is the influence an actor can potentially bring to bear over others; and, finally, power may be seen as the ability to restructure a situation.

Perceptions of unequal power often influence the composition of MSFs right from the start. This means that analysing power *within* the forum is important to assess and consider who is well placed or has the legitimacy to represent the MSF, which MSF stakeholders are possibly too dominant, or which stakeholders need support and empowerment to ensure that their views and contributions are accounted for. As for stakeholder engagement, 'soft skills' are needed to manage (and, possibly, redistribute) power/influence amongst stakeholders.

It is always important to carry out an initial power analysis to ascertain who has the legitimacy and power to represent different interest groups.

Knowledge

Stakeholders display different types of knowledge that often reflect their interests. Knowledge held by stakeholders depends on their backgrounds – for example, their relative wealth, their education, and context. Scientific knowledge may be characterized as deductive or inductive and seeks generic mechanisms. This differs significantly from local knowledge, which may be handed down through generations.

Preferences and values

Many scholars have examined the importance of taking preferences and values into account. Determining and integrating the various types of stakeholder preferences and values can improve understanding of socio-ecological systems and help practitioners develop appropriate strategies to enable stakeholder engagement (both between the intervention and stakeholders, and among stakeholders) to foster cooperation.

Human values are increasingly recognized as important to stakeholder analysis. These are the principles, convictions and beliefs that people adopt and follow in their daily activities, which may change over time. Human values strongly influence attitudes. These are important – if stakeholders have a positive attitude towards an ILM intervention, the likelihood of sustained success is increased. Attitudes can be tracked over time and can be a significant indicator of intervention success and sustainability.

What are the challenges with stakeholder management?

Managing, coordinating and convening stakeholders is not without its challenges. Stakeholder engagement is a continuous process, and we stress again the importance of deploying soft skills in the engagement process. Common challenges confronted by ILM projects engaging stakeholders are:

Stakeholder diversity

As indicated above, this is not (only) a reflection of, for example, stakeholder ethnicities. Stakeholders display a wide range of interests. This can make it difficult to determine which stakeholder groups are relevant to the intervention's ambition. Depending on what the intervention is trying to achieve, diversity can also confound efforts to decide who should represent different stakeholder groups, what kinds of roles and responsibilities these groups should have, and how to (diplomatically and with care) redress power imbalances across the stakeholder landscape.

Conflict

It should be assumed that stakeholder inter-relations will always be typified by (at least some) differences, which may lead to conflict. For technical interventions, conflict can be challenging to address. Excessively rigid projects may not have the necessary flexibility to address and accommodate conflict among stakeholders.

Intervention orientation

How should the intervention position itself in a stakeholder landscape? Key considerations are whether it should assume neutrality and create 'neutral spaces' for stakeholder engagement. Alternatively, the intervention team might seek to empower certain groups.

Transaction costs

Stakeholder engagement is complex, given stakeholder diversity and inter-relationships. Stakeholder reactions to the intervention and subsequent emergent changes are very difficult to anticipate, especially if the intervention team does not already have established relationships within the landscape. Developing trust, understanding and respect takes time (normally much longer than project durations of three to five years); conflict can be difficult to address; power differences between stakeholders may be problematic and, where MSFs are to be created, may require unusual configurations (for example, two separate MSFs because respective stakeholder groups refuse to engage with one another). Whatever the case, engaging with stakeholders will increase an intervention's transaction costs. These can be justified, given the importance of stakeholders in successful ILM.

Steps and tools to identify and analyse stakeholders

STEP 1: How are stakeholders identified?

Activity	Suggested tools
Stakeholder identification	• Snowball sampling • Consultations • Focus group discussions

When an intervention is being considered, its purpose and intent must be clearly understood and defined. Once these have been articulated, the strategic relevance of actors to an intervention can be assessed, and stakeholders identified.

Stakeholders should be identified early in the design phase of an intervention, including the problem identification and planning phases, and their relevance to the ILM intervention should be assessed and reassessed throughout the intervention lifecycle. This relevance will necessarily change over the lifespan of an intervention.

In stakeholder assessments, a common first step is to cast the net wide and identify as many stakeholders as possible. This can be accomplished via 'snowball sampling' in which groups of potential stakeholders are consulted and asked to identify who they think relevant stakeholders are. This is an iterative process – as some stakeholders are identified, they are then consulted and additional stakeholders are identified, and so on. While carrying out stakeholder mapping, it is important to delimit the geographic area that will limit the mapping exercise. This could be national, sub-national or local areas, or across scales.

To obtain a wide sample, a diversity of contrasting stakeholder groups should be consulted, from both within and outside the landscape. In consultations, care should be taken to identify stakeholders who will support an intervention's ambition and those who might oppose it.

STEP 2: How are stakeholders categorized?

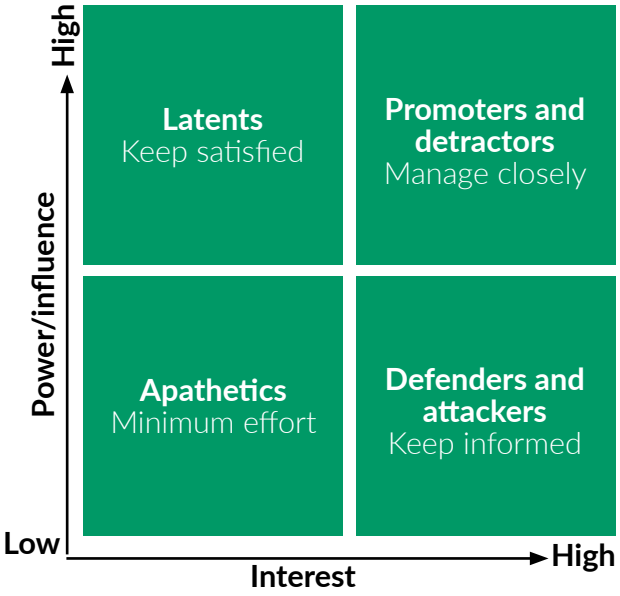
Activity	Examples of tools
Stakeholder sorting	• Power-Interest Grid • Influence-Interest Matrix • Stakeholder Characteristics and Roles Matrix • Stakeholder Circle methodology • Rich-pictures (or Mind Maps)

Once stakeholders have been identified, the next step is to sort them into groups (or categories) to better understand their strategic relevance to the intervention and to identify who the project will target for attention and/or engagement. This step can also include consideration of who the project would want to include in any intervention MSFs.

Different stakeholder analysis methodologies propose different ways of sorting stakeholders and analysing their inter-relationships. Here, we introduce two.

Mendelow's Matrix

The first is Aubrey L Mendelow's famous 'power-interest grid' in which stakeholders are categorized in terms of their power (to influence intervention success) and interest (the extent to which their own interests are aligned with those of the project). This yields the following characterizations:



Promoters and detractors: There should only be a few of these, and they will have high power and high interest and, therefore, strategic importance to the intervention. These stakeholders should be managed closely. Stakeholders may be positive ('promoters') or negative ('detractors'). While it is tempting to engage only with promoters, serious consideration (including their involvement in MSFs) must be given to detractors.[2]

Latents have no particular interest or involvement in an intervention. If this changes, however, they have enough power to affect it. These should, therefore, be 'kept satisfied.'

Defenders and attackers have a high (or vested) interest in the intervention but low power. Again, these stakeholders might support the intervention ('defenders') or work to oppose it ('attackers'). Ignoring people in this quadrant is tempting because they have insufficient power to derail the intervention. If, however, they get sufficiently annoyed about something, they may seek influence to resist the intervention.

Apathetics have little power or interest in the intervention. The strategic relevance of this group may be low, but it is useful to keep in touch with them in case their status should change.

Influence-Interest Matrix

A variant of Mendelow's Matrix, this approach may provide more nuance, as it explicitly focuses on those who might interfere or oppose an intervention. Obviously, strategies here should focus on what needs to be done to shift stakeholders from the left of the matrix to the right.

Here, some stakeholders will actively support the intervention, while others will actively oppose it. At the same time, there will be those who quietly and passively support/oppose the intervention from behind the scenes. These can be difficult to identify and may only emerge during implementation.

'Fence-sitters' are a lot like 'latents' in the power-interest grid. At the start, they neither support nor oppose the intervention, but their position may change as the intervention progresses. Obviously, once they act, it is in the interests of the intervention that they become active supporters. This group – which may be large – needs to be monitored, and efforts made to try to win over these otherwise undecided people or groups.

		Active	Passive		Active	Passive
		Opponents		**Fence-sitters**	**Supporters**	
Power	**High**					
	Medium					
	Low					

STEP 3: How are stakeholder inter-relations analysed?

Activity	Examples of tools
Analysing stakeholder inter-relations	• Net-Map • Social Network Analysis • The Power Cube

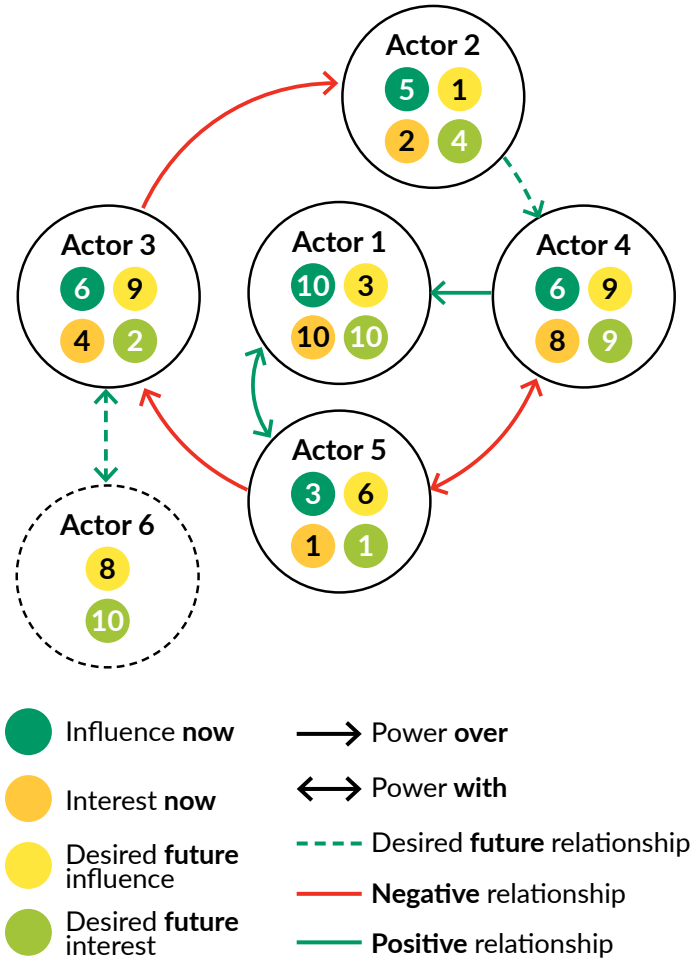
Relationships *between* stakeholders are of immense importance to any intervention. Stakeholders will usually have conflicting interests, whether these are across areas of activity (for example, land use, production, subsistence, or conservation); or between levels (for example, between local stakeholders and regional authorities, or central government). Such conflicting interests can harm ILM interventions, or even cause these to fail. Stakeholder analysis tries to determine what these are, how they affect the ILM intervention (both positively and negatively) and how the differences between stakeholder interests can be reduced.

Sorting helps to classify stakeholders into groups of strategic relevance to the intervention. Many of the tools that allow for this kind of analysis can also allow for stakeholder identification, sorting, and for inter-relations to be assessed. Here we introduce two examples, although readers are encouraged to consider others (see 'Suggested reading and resources').

We have stressed that landscapes are complex. Landscapes are socio-ecological *systems*. As complex systems, this means that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. This is because complex systems comprise not just their individual components, but also the inter-relationships between them. Often, these are dependent relationships, and they ensure that when a change affects certain components in one part of the system, the effect cascades throughout the system. Analysing these inter-relationships is therefore important to ILM interventions.

Net-Map

Influence Network Mapping is an effective tool that focuses explicitly on power relations between stakeholders. Once stakeholders have been sorted, each stakeholder is awarded two scores out of ten. The first refers to its 'contemporary power,' where a score of ten means that the stakeholder has total power over the intervention's goals. A score of zero means it has none. In its original conceptualization, participants in the Net-Mapping exercise stack chips to indicate this power as 'power towers.' Arguably, the intervention team should be the first stakeholder to be identified, and – as a repository of the project's vision and purpose – should have a contemporary score of ten (Actor 1 in the diagram below). The second score is a desired future power, also out of ten. If the stakeholder has a high contemporary power score but asserts negative power over the intervention, strategies may be deployed to reduce this group's influence over the project's ambition in the future. Other stakeholders may have low contemporary scores but, because the intervention wishes to see them empowered, higher future scores.



Interest can be incorporated into the Net-Map, although this can lengthen the exercise considerably. This is also provided in the diagram on the left.

The Landscapes For Our Future programme has, through implementation, arrived at several modifications of the original Net-Map approach to characterize power inter-relationships between stakeholders. Here, arrows are used to identify links between stakeholders, with an arrow's direction indicating 'power over'. In the diagram above, Actor 3 exercises power over Actor 2; obviously, Actor 2 experiences 'power under.' A two-way arrow indicates 'power with,' while a dotted arrow denotes a desired future relationship. The colour of the arrow indicates the nature of the relationship (positive/negative) insofar as the intervention's ambition is concerned. Hence, Actor 5's relationship over Actor 3 is perceived as negative to intervention interests, while that between Actor 5's and Actor 1's is perceived as equitable and positive. Actor 6 is one that does not currently exist and is a desired future stakeholder group – a new institution, perhaps, or an MSF. Hence, this actor has no contemporary power or interest score.

Social Network Analysis (SNA)

There are many varieties of this, which typically seek to identify stakeholders and then identify the links between them. In the example described here, the 'strength' of these links (called 'ties') is determined by the frequency of communication between network members. SNAs are commonly quantitative in nature, with data entered into SNA software to generate network maps.

Social networks comprise actors who are 'tied' to one another through 'socially meaningful relations.' These relations can then be analysed for structural patterns that emerge among these actors. In analysing these relations, attention is paid to how actors are positioned in the network, and whether relations between stakeholders reveal patterns.

Ties between actors can be categorized into 'strong' and weak' ties.

Strong ties are of interest in an ILM intervention because:

(a) members influence one another more than those sharing weak ties – hence, if some small part of a strong tie network agrees and supports an intervention's ambition, they can then influence other network members in the same direction, building off...

(b) the high levels of trust they typically share;

(c) the similarities in their views, preferences and possibly values;

(d) relatively high levels of habitual communication between network members, for example discussing and debating complex information or circumstances; and

(e) the mutual support they provide to each other in times of difficulty.

Strong tie networks, however, have the disadvantage that they tend to have the same information and knowledge regarding a landscape. Diverse or new information travels best through weak tie networks where communication tends to be less frequent.

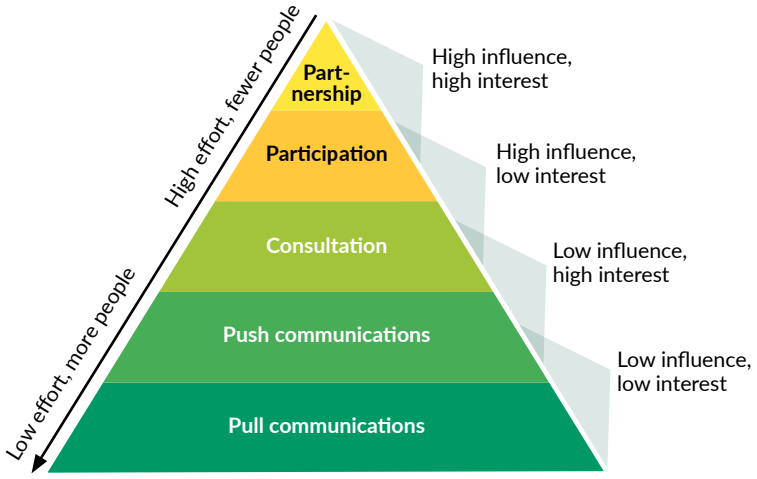
Weak ties usually exist between dissimilar network members and, therefore, offer external and diffuse sources of information – which are important to developing solutions to landscape challenges.

Weak ties can make a network more resilient and adaptive to landscape change – even if they are more likely to break. However, weak-tie networks may lack the levels of trust and understanding needed for debate on landscape and environmental change.

In order to carry out this kind of SNA, stakeholders are identified and then, in follow-up, questionnaires administered that obtain data on the strength of relations between network members – for example, questions about frequency of communication between them, or whether they would discuss matters with each other when times are difficult. These data are then entered into SNA[3] software (for example, RStudio, Gephi, Cytoscape or NodeXL)[4] for subsequent analysis.

What are stakeholder engagement strategies?

Determining the degree to which stakeholders will be engaged is a strategic choice. The degree of engagement reflects the degree of power that stakeholders have (or are allowed) in an intervention. The level and degree of engagement is important – it is a key way in which integration can occur across a landscape.



Where stakeholders are placed in the range of strategic possibilities will then generally inform the strategies used to engage with them. Gideon Rosenblatt's Engagement Pyramid, which draws on Mendelow's Matrix, provides some pointers. The higher the strategic relevance of a stakeholder to an intervention, the more effort is needed to engage them. Low levels of strategic influence require much less effort, and communications approaches that expect little to no feedback.[5]

How different stakeholders of varying strategic relevance are engaged can be elaborated in a Theory of Change (ToC), a hypothesis about *how* an intervention will achieve the outcomes it seeks. It is hypothetical because landscapes are complex systems – which means we cannot predict what stakeholders within it will do, or how they might react when confronted by new circumstances or knowledge. An 'outcome' is a change in stakeholder behaviour or practice.

Once stakeholders have been identified and analysed, the key stakeholders that the project feels it should target will have been identified, and their inter-relationships characterized. Above, we have emphasised the importance of a *strategic* stakeholder analysis – i.e., the relevance of individual stakeholder groups, or the inter-relationships between groups, to intervention ambition. Typically, analyses of these kinds will identify needed changes in the practice of individual stakeholder groups, or improvements to the relationships between them. ToCs provide a starting point for developing strategies to enable these changes.

Suggested reading and resources

Stakeholder identification

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Colvin RM, Witt GB and Lacey J. 2016. Approaches to identifying stakeholders in environmental management: Insights from practitioners to go beyond the 'usual suspects.' *Land Use Policy* 52: 266–276. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2015.12.032

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URBACT. (n.d.). *Engaging stakeholders: power/interest matrix* (how-to presentation). https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/stakeholders_power_interest_matrix_0.pdf

Influence-interest matrix

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Stakeholder circle methodology

Mosaic Project Services. (n.d.). *Stakeholder circle® methodology*. https://mosaicprojects.com.au/PMKI-SHM-010.php

Stakeholder Management. (n.d.). *Stakeholder circle© methodology*. https://www.stakeholdermapping.com/stakeholder-circle-methodology/

Net-Mapping

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Net-Map toolbox: https://web.archive.org/web/20110204183500/http://netmap.ifpriblog.org/

Schiffer E. 2007. *The Power Mapping Tool: A method for the empirical research of power relations*. (IFPRI Discussion Paper.) Washington D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute. http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/42410/2/IFPRIDP00703.pdf

Schiffer E and Hauck J. 2010. Net-Map: Collecting social network data and facilitating network learning through participatory Influence Network Mapping. *Field Methods* 22(3): 231–249. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X10374798

Participatory Impact Pathway Analysis

Douthwaite B, Alvarez S, Cook S, Davies R, George P, Howell J, Mackay R and Rubiano J. 2007. Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis: a practical application of program theory in research-for-development. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 22(2): 127–159. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.22.007

Douthwaite B, Proietti C, Polar V and Thiele G. 2022. Using theory to understand how policy change happens: Insights from agricultural research for development. *Research Evaluation*. https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvac038

PIPA Wiki: http://pipamethodology.pbworks.com/w/page/70283575/Home%20Page

Power Cube

Gaventa J. 2006. Finding the spaces for change: A power analysis. *IDS Bulletin* 37(6): 23–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00320.x

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Rich pictures

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Other guides in this series

For more information or downloads of other guides in this evolving series, see **landscapesfuture.org/landscapes-in-practice**.

1. See Talley JL, Schneider J and Lindquist E. 2016. A simplified approach to stakeholder engagement in natural resource management: the Five-Feature Framework. Ecology and Society 21(4):38. https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-08830-210438
2. Note that in Mendelow's original 1981 version of the matrix, he identified promoters, latents, defenders and apathetics. In this grid, we have modified 'defenders' and 'promoters' to reflect that stakeholders in these categories can be oppositional and even belligerent.
3. Some easy examples can be found in the following toolbox: Neely C, Bourne M, Chesterman S and Smith Dumont E. 2020. Resilient Food Systems Tailored SHARED Toolbox - Enhancing inclusive and evidence-based policy development. Rome: FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2344en
4. Note that we do not recommend or endorse any of this software. Much analysis software is commercial, although Gephi and Cytoscape are open-source.
5. 'Push' and 'pull' communications are one-way and controlled by the sender. They do not require person-to-person engagement. 'Push communications' often include 'dissemination' and 'making available' documents, journal papers, or emails. 'Pull communications' include social media, websites or newsletters.

PHOTOS

Cover: Chief Narcizo of the Paresí ethnic group in the Cerrado Biome in Brazil and Paraguay. *Photo by Andre Dib.*

Page 2: Park manager of the Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe. *Photo by Dominique le Roux/CIFOR-ICRAF.*

Page 4: Indigenous Hmong women on the outskirts of the Nam Et-Phou Louey National Park in Northern Lao PDR. *Photo by Dominique le Roux/CIFOR-ICRAF.*

Page 7: The Mi Biósfera project team in Honduras. *Photo by Peter Cronkleton.*

Page 9: Engagement with community stakeholders in Northern Kenya. *Photo by Dominique le Roux/CIFOR-ICRAF.*