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Reflection Paper – Pathways to Peace: Defining Community in the Age of Globalization

I very much appreciate the opportunity to participate in this seminar and share our experiences as practitioners and researchers about the nature of community and ways to transform conflict into cooperation, particularly across borders. In reading Aaron Wolf's paper, what resonated most with me was the underlying theme of integration, be it across the spiritual-rational and the North/West – South/East divides or through the different stages or cycles of conflict transformation. The triad of justice, loving kindness, and compassion is of course about integration through balance. Mutual gains bargaining or interest based negotiation (ADR) models are all about integrating and balancing interests, wants, needs, and values. My recollection is that despite its current Western provenance, the practice of mediation actually began with water disputes in China 2000+ years, specifically to resolve agricultural irrigation conflicts. So, it may not be surprising that environmental mediation connects so well with Aaron's integrative perspective bringing East and West closer together. As I offer my preliminary responses to the questions asked of us, I realize that the need for better integration is behind most of my answers.

1. What lessons, both positive and negative, have you drawn from your academic research and/or practice in the field?

- From practice:

Conflict management/resolution/transformation is hard to do. It takes a lot of work, special conditions and resources. When it does work, it is dazzling, when it doesn't work, it can be quite detrimental. There are so many ways in which these processes can go awry, it really is a miracle when it does all come together. It is even harder to sustain new found collaborative engagement over time among diverse participants, unless the intensity or imminence of the shared resource loss or threat remains salient.

Two additional lessons here: first, consultation and assessment (those very first steps in how people are convened and what and how questions are being asked) are a critical part of the collaborative process starting well before everyone gets to the table; and second, conflict resolution happens in and must connect

with the diverse cultural and institutional contexts. Aaron writes about the spiritual and cross cultural imperatives, but

there are also political and legal authorities, critical for traction toward long term sustainable solutions, that need to be understood and fully engaged.

- From research:

Conflict management/resolution/transformation (particularly in the multi-party, public policy context) is hard to study. The wisdom of practitioners has been our primary guide, but as researchers, we are still trying to figure out what key factors determine success, what success is, and how you best measure it. Research recently published on 52 U.S. cases of environmental conflict resolution (ECR) offers some evidence of those key factorsⁱ, but we still have a long way to go in order to link ECR processes to substantive, sustainable outcomes on the ground or in the water. Most studies, like ours, stop with the agreement. Longitudinal studies with larger N data bases are needed if we are ever to establish performance outcomes and effectiveness.

Final pertinent lesson re. integration: ADR and ECR began as an “alternative” to conventional dispute resolution systems, like the courts and other local or administrative tribunals. I think we have learned that to be most effective, ECR should be better integrated with existing socio/ecological/political/legal contexts. It stands as one among several avenues to pursue for best resolving a given dispute or working collaboratively toward a shared solution. Hence, some now call ADR “appropriate dispute resolution.” Taking this a bit further, might we serve this agenda for transforming conflict by stepping back and exploring the larger governance system, of which dispute resolution is one part? Can we have effective conflict resolution if the governance system is seriously impaired or failing? I think we need to integrate our practice and research on conflict resolution back into “governance” and broaden our perspective on governance as cross-sector, cross-scale systems. The challenge then is how to build those collaborative governance systems to assure peaceful, sustainable community engagement.

2. What barriers need to be overcome and/or questions need to be answered to make progress in environmental peacemaking?

- Barriers to practice:

The list is long, but I think at the top would be 1) the limited capacity of public and private stakeholders to engage together in collaborative negotiation and 2) the lack of trusted institutions to convene

conflict resolution processes. Regarding capacity, I think we need to do better than we have, when we presume that “training” is the answer to this barrier. Creating opportunities for mutual learning, for

example, might be a start. Many of us have been so fixated on “the mediator” as part of the conflict resolution equation in this field, that we are only now starting to consider social learning that Aaron mentions and how to enable that across cultures. We have been so party-centric, that we have forgotten the importance of leadership not just in the convening role, but as a quality we want to develop in every person in the process. Building the capacity not only to negotiate, but to repair or initiate relationships, integrate new information and change our frames for understanding problems and possible solution sets are just a few of the competencies to foster, not to mention the moral imperatives and spiritual and cultural understandings and tolerance to cultivate.

Regarding the need for convening institutions (having spent the past 12 years building one at the national level), we know that trust building is a central function of these collaborative processes, and to get such processes started, we need the trust and credibility of some broadly respected, neutral entity, be it a public agency, a university center, an NGO, or an elder. We need to create more trusted staging grounds, or “arenas” as Tom Fiutak refers to them, either by re-building existing institutions, re-purposing others, or creating new ones.

- Research questions:

Following on my previous comments about research on performance and refocusing on “collaborative governance,” I think we need to better clarify what we mean by collaborative governance and how we link it to the kinds of sustainable outcomes and conditions of community resilience we expect. I have been working on one such integrative framework for describing and studying collaborative governance and have attached a few excerpts from a recent paper on this.ⁱⁱ

3. Please reflect on how linkages among different levels (individual, community, state, international community) and topics (environmental, development, conflict, peace) are made and sustained and the barriers to creating such linkages.

My observations here are pretty basic and not necessarily satisfying, because I realize the devil is in the details. Hypothesis: Vertical and horizontal linkages are made by and among people (agency), developed through informed and constructive interactions (processes) and sustained through decision making and incentivizing institutions (structures). Another triad that needs to be integrated! I think one way to do that is to conceptualize the linkages across scales and policy areas through a broadened view of

governance systems that draw together the public, private and civic spheres to create public value and solve public problems. Collaborative governance may be one way to do that, in democratizing settings, where power imbalances are not too great. Or it might be an appropriate or trusted “bridge” model for negotiating

across different cultural or political state boundaries. But for agreements reached or treaties signed to be fulfilled and sustained over time, they need to be integrated into a functioning and abiding governance system.

Food for thought.

ⁱ Emerson, Kirk, Patricia Orr, Dale Keyes, and Kathy McKnight. 2009. “Environmental Conflict Resolution: Evaluating Performance Outcomes and Contributing Factors” *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 27(1). 27. This is an empirical study of 52 environmental conflict resolution (ECR) processes based on an evaluation framework that specifies key conditions and factors that contribute to ECR outcomes. Data were collected on a range of ECR processes and applications. This paper reports on findings from a multi-level modeling analysis that focuses on three primary outcomes: reaching agreement, the quality of agreement, and improved working relationships among parties. Effective engagement of parties is identified as a major contributor to all three outcomes. Other key factors that operate directly and indirectly through effective engagement include the involvement of appropriate parties, the skills and practices of ECR mediators and facilitators, and the incorporation of relevant and high quality information. Findings generally support the ECR evaluation framework.

ⁱⁱ Emerson, Kirk, Andrea K. Gerlak, Olivier Barreteau, Marilyn Buchholtz ten Brink, Neda Farahbakhshazad, Greg Morrison, and Panomsak Promburon, “Framework to Assess Collaborative Governance: A New Look at Four Water Resource Management Cases” Prepared for Presentation at 2009 Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Conference Amsterdam December 2 -4, 2009.

“... We argue that collaborative governance should enable greater adaptive flexibility in the face of climate change, but little is currently known about the performance of collaborative governance to substantiate that position. In order to consider such a claim, a framework is needed to study collaborative governance in a variety of settings and scales. We have been working to develop such a framework , drawing on an array of theory and practice from different fields and specific lines of research (Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh 2009). With an integrative framework , we can begin to articulate and test the extent to which collaborative governance is effectively performing, adapting in response to its performance and to changing external conditions.

Our framework is designed to encompass the contributions and interactions of leaders and participants in cooperation; shared capacity (including motivation, structural mechanisms, resources, and knowledge); and processes of collaborative engagement (including joint definition, deliberation, and determination), along with the articulation of implementing actions, system impacts, and governance adaptation. The framework is sufficiently generic to apply across a wide range of policy arenas, scales, and geographic settings, yet specific enough to be operationalized and enable empirical investigation. Here we apply the framework to four collaborative water resources initiatives located

in Sweden, the United States, France, and Thailand. We explore the framework's utility in describing and illuminating the dimensions of collaborative governance and its performance.”...

Table 2: Assessing Performance across the Cases*

Performance Dimensions	Melby River	Piscataqua Region	Drome River	Mae Hae River
<i>Cooperation</i>				
Effective leadership/multiple leadership roles	+	++	+	+
Broad stakeholder representation and participation	+	+	-	+
<i>Shared Capacity</i>				
Trust and working relationships improved	+	+	++	+
Joint commitment to shared goals	+	+	+	-
Appropriate internal organizational structures	+	+	+	+
Organizational relationship to external authorities	+	+	+	-
Adequate funding and other resources	+	+/-	+	+
Appropriate legal, technical and expert capacity	+	++	+	-
Knowledge generation, use and access	+	+/-	+	+
<i>Engagement</i>				
Scope and terms of collaboration well defined	+	+	+	+
Deliberation and open communication among all parties	+	+	+	+
Consultation with broader public/constituents	+	+/-	-	+
Effective conflict resolution	+	+	+	+
Joint determinations made	+	+	+	+
Quality of determinations	++	++	+	0
<i>Implementing Actions</i>				
Implementing actions taken	+	+/-	+/-	-
Actions consistent with determinations	+	+	+	N/A
<i>Impacts</i>				
Specific short term targets met	+	+/-	+	-
Longer term direct/indirect impacts observed	+	+	0	N/A
<i>Adaptation</i>				

Actions and impacts monitored	+	+/-	+/-	N/A
Adjustments made to subsequent priorities, tasks, determinations	+	+	+	N/A
Adaptation of collaboration based on feedback	+	+	0	-

Key: Strong positive presence or trend (++); positive presence (+); not observed (0); negative or absent (-); strongly negative occurrence (--); not applicable (N/A)