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A Framework for Assessing Power in Collaborative Governance Processes

The growing use of collaborative methods of governance raises concerns about the relative power of participants in such processes and the potential for exclusion or domination of some parties. This research offers a framework for assessing power that considers authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy as sources of power and considers the participants, the process design, and the content of collaborative governance processes as arenas for power use. A case study of a collaborative governance process is presented and analyzed using the power framework. Implications for the design of collaborative governance processes are discussed, including the benefits of a multidimensional definition of power, tools for managing power imbalances among participants, and strategies that participants can use to participate more fully in collaborative governance processes.

S tate and federal agencies are using collaborative processes so often that their use has become institutionalized (Cheng 2006). Collaboration describes "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (Gray 1989, 5). Collaborative governance processes such as multistakeholder roundtables, dispute resolution processes, community advisory councils, and regulatory negotiations bring together organizations from the government, business, and nonprofit sectors to collaborate on problems of mutual concern. The benefits of collaborative processes include greater responsiveness to complex situations and more deliberation than traditional governance processes (Leach 2006). Collaborative governance may produce more effective, efficient, and flexible policies (Sousa and Klyza 2007) with greater public acceptability.

However, using collaboration to govern also has flaws and weaknesses. Gerlak and Heikkala describe "many institutional and political obstacles to collaboration, including conflicting agency goals and missions, inflexible administrative and legal procedures, and constrained financial resources" (2005, 658). The

incomplete legal foundation for collaborative processes raises questions about authority, transparency, and accountability (Bingham 2009). The context of collaborative governance may not fairly balance private interests and public authority (Sousa and Klyza 2007). Critical interests may not be represented (Leach 2006), and collaborative processes may bias decisions toward the participants with greater resources. Finally, collaboration can be a way of advancing self-interested goals such as increasing power (Huxham and Vangen 2000).

Many of these concerns are linked to power disparities among participating organizations and how power affects such issues as representation, participation, and voice. This article offers a framework for assessing power and how power is used in collaborative governance processes. Power is described along multiple dimensions, including authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy, and three arenas for power use are considered here: the participants, the process design, and the content of collaborative governance processes. A case study offers examples of how the framework can be used to assess power. The article concludes by discussing the implications of the power framework for understanding and designing collaborative governance processes, including how power imbalances may be addressed.

Sources of Power and Arenas for Power Use in Collaborative Governance

Collaboration occurs in the context of public management when stakeholders work together with government to create new policies or to address public problems. Authors refer to this variously as cross-sector collaboration (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006), new governance (Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary 2005), collaborative public management (O'Leary and Bingham 2007), or collaborative governance (Carlson 2008). The term "collaborative governance" is used in this article to refer to processes that seek to share power in decision making with stakeholders in order to develop shared recommendations for effective, lasting solutions to public problems. Collaborative

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governance is a cross-sector concept spanning the public, private, nonprofit, and citizen domains (Policy Consensus Initiative 2005).

Prior research identifies two primary concerns about power in cross-sector collaborations: convening stakeholders and managing power imbalances (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006). First, adequate power is needed to convene stakeholders, but government agencies often act as both conveners and participants in collaborative processes, raising questions about their ability to dominate such processes (Broome 2002). Second, actors who are less powerful in terms of resources, voice, or legitimacy may be excluded from collaborative processes or may be co-opted by more dominant parties (O'Toole and Meier 2004). Despite the importance of such concerns, little theory exists to guide conveners, participants, and researchers in understanding how power shapes collaborative processes and outcomes. Huxham and Vangen note that "there is no coherent body of literature on power in collaborative settings" (2005, 174).

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Analyzing power in collaborative processes is challenging because they are ambiguous, complex contexts in which participants, social structures, and processes can change rapidly (Huxham and Vangen 2000). Theories addressing personal forms of power are inadequate for understanding collaborative processes, while models emphasizing structural aspects of power are limited by their focus on a single organizational context. To understand power in collaborative governance processes, one must consider power's political, economic, and social aspects (Bierstedt 1950), as well as its structural, relational, and cognitive aspects (Hardy and Phillips 1998). A framework is needed that addresses the sources of power and the dynamics of power so that we can understand both power attributes and how relational power changes over time.

Conceptualizing power in terms of its sources implicitly assumes that power is a resource that can be expanded, diminished, or transferred. However, a purely zero-sum, resource-based view of power is inadequate for collaborative contexts. Power can be used to advance the joint efforts of the collaborators, resulting in mutual gain, or to empower others to participate more effectively in the collaboration, resulting in altruistic gain. Huxham and Vangen place the three power orientations of own gain, mutual gain, and altruistic gain on a continuum and label them "power over," "power to," and "power for" (2005, 175). Concern for others' interests is most likely to emerge under conditions of good communication, trust, and shared goals (Norris-Tirrell and Clay 2010), emphasizing that context and process as well as resources play a role in determining power orientation.

The framework offered here considers both the sources of power held by collaborative governance participants and the arenas that collaborative processes provide for the use of power. Through these twin foci, the framework describes the kinds of power held by participants in collaborative processes and reveals how power can be exercised structurally and relationally in collaborative processes.

Sources of Power: Authority, Resources, and Legitimacy
In collaborative governance processes, organizations and coalitions with varying degrees of cohesiveness, resources, and political clout interact in complex relational webs. Hardy and Phillips (1998) propose three sources of power that are particularly useful for understanding interorganizational dynamics: authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy. Each of these sources of power is discussed here.

Authority is the socially acknowledged right to exercise judgment, make a decision, or take action (Greenwald 2008). Authority is determined by relative status within the institutional context in which the participating parties are embedded. While authority may be achieved coercively, most often it results from social agreement to delegate power over defined areas to a particular organization or role. As Mary Parker Follett noted, the "true state is utterly dependent upon us for its appearance . . . we do not have a sovereign state until we make one" (1918, 315). The authority of a government agency to set and enforce rules is accepted because citizens share a belief in the "rationalization and the regulation of human activity by legal and bureaucratic hierarchies" (Friedland and Alford 1991, 248). This bureaucratic logic permeates most collaborative governance processes because they are convened by governmental bodies, resulting in a rational-legal interpretation of authority. The authority of government is tied to its rights to establish and enforce rules, while the authority of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens stems from their right to participate in governance or to pursue legal action.

While authority may appear to be an objective form of power, it can shift over time as the social order is renegotiated. The negotiation of authority can occur at the macro level through legislative and judicial processes or at the micro level through group-level discussion (Follett 1918). For collaborative governance processes, viewing authority as malleable recognizes that participants with authority can share it with others, for example, by committing to enact the group's recommendation rather than accepting it as advisory.

The "power over" perspective frames authority as a trump card that dictates which participant ultimately gets to decide an issue. The "power to" perspective suggests that authority is vital to the success of collaboration—it "gives teeth to a collaborative effort" (Straus 2002, 40). Without authority, the shared problem or common goal that brought participants together in a collaborative governance process may not be solved or achieved even if the group reaches consensus. From the "power for" perspective, authority also can be used to sanction the participation of stakeholders who might otherwise be marginalized. Empowering others through participation in decisions "increases the total capacity for effective action rather than increases domination" (Kanter 1977, 166).

Resource-based power recognizes the dependencies among organizations involved in collaboration and their ability to deploy resources. Resources include tangibles such as financial resources, people, technology, and supplies; and intangibles such as knowledge, culture, and capabilities. Resource power is distinct from authority; for example, the information held by government agencies gives them influence that extends beyond their authority to make rules (Freeman and Langbein 2000). Organizations depend on human

resources to represent them in collaborative governance processes, while information and knowledge resources are needed to comprehend and analyze the issues. Financial resources can allow organizations to gain expert advice or representation in collaborative processes, increasing their influence. In addition to using resources for their own benefit, organizations can use resources to influence other participants in collaborative processes by rewarding them for support or compliance or by punishing them for dissension or noncompliance.

In collaborative contexts, the relational and perceptual aspects of power may be as important as the objective ability to command resources. For example, those with financial resources often behave as if they hold power, while those lacking them typically feel disempowered, even if they have alternative sources of power available (Huxham and Vangen 2005). Similarly, "people who are thought to have power already . . . who look like they can command more of the organization's resources . . . may also be more influential and more effective in getting the people around them to do things and feel satisfied about it" (Kanter 1977, 168–69).

Discursive legitimacy refers to the ability of an organization to represent a discourse or speak on behalf of an issue in the public sphere (Hardy and Phillips 1998). Organizations exercise discursive legitimacy when they act on behalf of the values or norms of a society, such as the rule of law, the logic of economic rationality, or principles such as democracy or respect for diverse cultures. An organization with discursive legitimacy draws its power from the status of the values or logic it represents. This form of power acknowledges that "interorganizational power relations cannot be fully understood without attention to the larger pattern of societal dominance" (Benson 1975, 233). Participants who lack authority or resources can exert power if they are perceived to speak on behalf of a societally important ideal, such as ecological preservation or racial equality.

> Some parties have discursive power based upon the discourse that is rooted in society. Put simply, this means that power is attributed to them because of the way we, *collectively,* talk about them in relation to others. (Huxham and Vangen 2005, 176)

A participant in collaborative governance may represent relatively low status people within a society, such as immigrants, but may exert power by linking to a societal value, such as acceptance of diversity. This type of discursive power is strongest when the value represented is widely shared and the organization's claim of representation for it is relatively uncontested.

Discursive power also stems from the ability to manage meaning by influencing how information is presented. This is particularly important in collaborative contexts because parties in collaboration are engaged in complex negotiations around developing common meanings and mutual identities (Huxham and Vangen 2005).

Arenas for Power: Participants, Process, and Content

While collaborative processes are widely used in government, "not every process calling itself collaborative is an authentic collaborative governance practice. To be authentic requires the use of appropriate organization, methods, and tools; facilitative leadership; and deliberative space free of coercion" (Booher 2004, 44). The three essential elements embedded in Booher's definition of authentic collaborative governance processes are the participants, the process design, and the content. Each of these components provides opportunities for the exercise of power.

Participants describe who is involved in a collaborative process and who leads it. Vital participants in collaborative governance processes are sponsors who identify an issue and initiate action, conveners who gather diverse people to work on common problems, and a neutral facilitator to negotiate interests, integrate resources, and establish accountability (Policy Consensus Initiative 2005). Participants should include those with formal power to make a decision, those who can block a decision, those affected by a decision, and those with relevant information or expertise (Straus 2002). Participation is often determined by leaders whose interpretation of the situation determines which stakeholders are invited to collaborate and which are excluded. Fung (2006) notes that the degree of democracy in a collaborative process can be determined in part by who is invited to participate. However, issues of participation extend beyond who is invited. Collaborative governance processes are voluntary, so some invited parties may choose not to participate because of mistrust of collaborative processes or a preference to address the situation through alternative means. Those who do participate vary in experience and effectiveness with such processes.

While many studies of collaborative governance exist, public administration research has not looked closely at *process design* for collaboration (Bingham 2009). Process design describes the where, when, and how of collaborative governance, influencing the nature of interaction and the modes that are used for communication and decision making. Processes for collaborative governance must be designed with flexibility to allow trial and error without creating ambiguity and confusion (Straus 2002), but the decision making of process design occurs before the actual content of the collaboration occurs. Process design determines whether participants feel fairly treated, and these perceptions of procedural justice influence satisfaction with the outcomes of the process (Brockner and Siegel 1996). Process design also helps convey status within a group, signaling who holds a leadership role and whether participants are equal.

A third arena for the exercise of power is the *content* of the collaboration, or what issues are addressed and what outcomes are pursued. Deciding the scope of the issues is an important opportunity for the use of power (Altheide 1988). The content of initial agreements in a collaboration affects the outcomes of the process (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006), and the interpretations that people use to identify issues and understand alternatives are closely linked to the success of the process (Gray 2004). Finally, decisions about the content of a collaborative process determine who has a legitimate claim to participate in the process and how the process will unfold (Gray 1989), linking content-related power use to participants and process design.

> In collaborative contexts, the relational and perceptual aspects of power may be as important as the objective ability to command resources.

Table 1 Framework for Assessing Power in Collaborative Processes

		ARENAS FOR POWER		
		Formal Authority	Resources	Discursive Legitimacy
PROCESS ELEMENTS	Participants	Selection of participants Limits on participants	Number of representatives Expertise of representatives	Status of representatives Use of coalitions
	Process Design	Ownership of the process Interaction expectations for the process Number, length, and location of meetings	How the process is paid for	Frequency of voice Methods of voice Communication about the process
	Content	Setting the agenda Outcome expectations for the process Use of indirect authority such as legal rights	Distribution of information Understanding and analyzing the issues Production of meeting records	Prioritization of issues Framing of the issues to be addressed

Framework for Assessing Power in Collaborative Governance Processes

A framework for assessing power in collaborative governance processes can be created by juxtaposing the three sources of power with the three arenas for power described earlier. The framework, shown in table 1, describes how authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy can be used to influence the participants, process design, and content of a collaborative process. This framework goes beyond rights-based approaches to power to allow a more nuanced investigation of power and its use in collaborative governance processes.

The framework acknowledges that collaborative processes are not objective, predetermined structures but are themselves imbued with interests and power (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Power can be visible on the surface of interactions as overt influence attempts, but it also can be deployed more subtly to frame conversations and to promote or marginalize participants' voices. Frost (1989) describes such efforts to shape perceptions of social reality as "using power in the deep structure." The deep structure is a shared system of meaning that operates in the collective unconscious of actors (Frost 1989; Hardy 1994). Deep structure uses of power attempt to reinforce or change taken-for-granted roles, structures, and modes of interaction (Everett and Jamal 2004; Frost 1989). The framework includes both surface uses of power, such as the inclusion of a particular stakeholder in a collaborative process, and deep structure uses of power, such as the language used to present issues for discussion.

In the participation arena, authority can be used to determine who is invited to participate and how broadly participation extends. More inclusive processes invite open public participation or self-selection, while less inclusive processes rely on the participation of elected officials or expert administrators (Fung 2006). However, merely constructing an open, inclusive process may not ensure that invitees participate. Resources may influence the number able to participate and how well-informed or expert participants are. In the deep structure, power can be used to influence the degree to which people engage in the collaborative process. Discursive legitimacy can affect the status of representatives and their ability to participate. Participants need to believe that they deserve a seat at the table (Hardy and Phillips 1998) and must be trusted to make commitments on behalf of their organizations to participate fully (Leach 2006). On the other hand, participants representing coalitions or collaborative networks may participate more vigorously because they represent the collective power of a group (Butterfield, Reed, and Lemak 2004).

In the process design arena, authority shapes beliefs about who owns the process and expectations about how the collaboration will proceed, including meeting frequency and formality. The right to design collaborative processes is linked to authority. The structure of public sector collaborations may be imposed by a host organization (Huxham and Vangen 2000); however, process design can also be a collaborative process (O'Toole and Meier 2004). An organization with authority may challenge deep structure notions about power by sharing its power to design the process. Once a process has been designed, the type and duration of interactions determine opportunities for participation and for the use of power (Sharfman, Gray, and Yan 1991). Processes can limit participants to listening as spectators, or they can enable participants to deliberate and negotiate (Fung 2006). Resources may influence such process factors as meeting frequency, meeting location(s), and options for participating in person, by telephone, or by videoconference. The costs of hosting and participating in collaborative processes, such as travel, lost work time, meeting space, note taking, and communication, are also linked to the availability of resources. Discursive legitimacy affects the modes and frequency of expression during meetings. Greater discursive legitimacy can lead to domineering behavior and one-way flows of information, or it can be used to perform a gatekeeping function that ensures equitable participation from all parties. In the deep structure, discursive legitimacy affects how participants communicate about the process to each other and to their constituents.

In the content arena, authority allows an organization to set the agenda and establish other participants' expectations regarding the outcome of the process. Other participants may draw on indirect sources of authority such as legal rights to shape the topics or scope of discussion. Resources provide organizations with the ability to collect, share, and interpret information about the issues and topics under discussion. For example, an organization with the capability of producing meeting records can control the scope and depth of documentation, which might influence future meetings. Discursive legitimacy can influence the prioritization of issues as participants assert the dominance of one issue or perspective over another. In the deep structure, discursive legitimacy operates by influencing the framing of issues. Frames are lenses that people use to interpret information and make sense of a situation (Gray 2004). Participants come to the process with cognitive frames that define what the issues mean to them, then engage in interactive issue framing to construct a shared meaning through dialogue (Dewulf et al. 2009). Power can be used to promote certain outcomes by imposing particular frames, or it can be used to prevent the discovery of common frames and shared meanings. Collaborative initiatives can be derailed if participants are unable to understand each others' frames (Gray 2004).

The framework presented here allows assessment of the power sources of participants to a collaborative process, how power can be

used by parties during a process, and how the design of the collaborative process shapes the exercise of power. To illustrate the framework's potential, a case study of a collaborative process is presented and analyzed using the power framework.

Case Methodology

In 2002, the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) used a collaborative governance process to redesign the rules for licensing hydroelectric dams, a multiyear process that typically involves dozens of studies, agencies, stakeholders, and decisions for each dam. In partnership with the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and the Interior, FERC sponsored a nationwide collaborative governance process that included 25 public meetings over a period of eight months. The process began with 11 forums held throughout the United States in October and November 2002, followed by a stakeholder meeting and drafting session held in December in Washington, D.C. FERC issued its proposal for a new licensing process in February 2003. Eleven more forums around the United States were held in March and April 2003, followed by another drafting session in May. FERC issued its new rules for hydroelectric licensing in July 2003.

The author attended one public forum and one tribal forum in November 2002 and obtained transcripts of all 25 meetings and drafting sessions from FERC. Interviews were conducted with three hydroelectric project owners, one NGO representative, one tribal representative, and two FERC representatives in 2002 and 2003 to gather additional information about FERC's collaborative process. Information about the collaborative governance process was collected from the publications and Web sites of industry associations such as the National Hydropower Association, nongovernmental organizations such as American Rivers, and federal agencies. Additional information about the U.S. hydroelectric licensing process was gathered from secondary sources, including FERC documents, peer-reviewed publications, and congressional hearings.

Data were analyzed in two stages. The first stage of data analysis involved constructing a detailed timeline of events related to the collaboration from 1997 to 2003 (Marshall and Rossman 1989). Beginning the timeline in 1997 allowed the identification of potential stakeholders and provided historical context for understanding the collaborative process. The second stage of data analysis focused on content analysis of the transcripts of the seven interviews and 25 public meetings sponsored by FERC. Transcripts were analyzed using NVivo software according to guidelines for theory-based content analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). Initial coding involved categorizing participants, process references, and content issues. A second pass through the data was used to code speech turns based on references to authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy. Following initial coding, subcategories were inductively created within the discursive legitimacy category to account for differences among stakeholders in sources of discursive legitimacy. The data were then sorted and transferred to a spreadsheet in order to create a matrix based on the constructs shown in table 1.

Case Study: Redesigning Hydroelectric Licensing

In the United States, hydroelectric licenses are issued by FERC for periods of 30 to 50 years. To receive a license, a hydroelectric project owner must satisfy the regulatory requirements of federal, state, and tribal governments and demonstrate that the project operates in the public interest. The process for licensing a dam required owners to commission scientific studies and file a license application. Public input consisted of a three-month comment period, and FERC often required additional studies or changes to the application. The licensing process typically took at least five years, and the cost could reach $10 million (Swiger and Burns 1998). Owners saw the process as adversarial and burdensome (National Hydropower Association 1999), and other stakeholders had few opportunities for input.

FERC revised the process in late 1997 so that regulatory agencies were involved from the beginning and NGOs and the public could participate more fully in environmental impact assessment. This alternative process sped up licensing by about one year (Andersen 2000), but stakeholders continued to demand a complete overhaul of the hydroelectric licensing process (Swiger and Grant 2004). In 2001, FERC formed the Interagency Hydropower Committee (IHC) in partnership with other federal agencies to design a new licensing process. Simultaneously, a coalition of owners and conservation groups formed the National Review Group (NRG) to develop their own recommendations for licensing.

The Collaborative Process

FERC's collaborative process in 2002–3 included 25 public meetings over a period of eight months. About half of the meetings were designated primarily for Native American tribes to provide input. Attendance at the meetings ranged from one person to more than 60 people. Some 155 different organizations and seven coalitions participated representing the six primary stakeholders: FERC, owners, federal agencies, state agencies, tribes, and NGOs.

The key interests of each group of stakeholders were as follows: FERC sought input from a range of stakeholders while retaining its role as the dominant authority in the process. Owners sought to speed up the licensing process so as to limit the authority of some agencies to impose restrictions on the license, and to have a choice of licensing processes. Federal agencies sought to retain their authority to solicit information and to place restrictions upon licenses. State agencies wanted recognition of their authority to impose restrictions on licenses. Native American tribes sought recognition of their status as sovereign nations and of their licensing authority. They were also concerned that a shorter licensing process would limit their ability to exercise their rights given limited resources. NGOs sought a single process that would make it easier for organizations with limited resources to participate in licensing. They wanted the process to gain speed, but not at the expense of thoroughness.

FERC's final rule, issued in 2003, created a single licensing process that allowed more coordination between stakeholders and increased opportunities for public participation and consultation. The changes made the licensing process more efficient without altering the authority to protect fish, national forests, Native American reservations, or rivers. FERC anticipated that the integrated licensing process would shorten the average licensing time and reduce licensing costs by about 30 percent. FERC also affirmed the sovereignty of federally recognized tribes and appointed a liaison to support tribal participation in licensing processes. Assessments of the collaborative process were largely positive. A hydropower industry newsletter noted that

"FERC completed a massive reform of its hydroelectric licensing process in a short period of time in a rulemaking largely heralded as successful by applicants and the many other stakeholders who participated in the rewriting process" (Swiger and Grant 2004, 3).

Case Study Analysis

The framework for assessing power can be applied to the collaborative process around hydroelectric licensing in order to yield insights into power dynamics among participants. Sources of power are examined first, followed by a discussion of how power was exercised through the participants, process design, and content of the collaborative process.

Sources of Power

FERC held multiple formal authorities, including the authority to issue hydroelectric licenses (16 U.S. 817), the authority to determine licensing procedures (42 U.S. 7173), and the authority to determine the collaborative process (5 U.S. 553). FERC had ample financial, informational, and human resources to invest in the process. Its discursive legitimacy arose from representing the federal government's interests in energy supply.

Owners had little authority except the choice of whether to pursue a project that required licensing, but they had significant financial, informational, and human resources. Their discursive legitimacy arose from the importance of their industry to the national energy supply and the economic rationality of hydropower projects.

Other federal and state agencies had the authority to enforce legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the Clean Water Act. Hydroelectric projects are governed by these laws, but, as a FERC attorney noted, "[Agencies] say they don't have independent authority to require applicants to provide information that they think is necessary. They have to come to FERC and ask us, acting through the Federal Power Act, to make the applicant to do the study." Agencies had fewer resources available to process license applications because of their broader missions. A state agency representative commented, "Thirty days is not an adequate period of time for an informed group of resource agency staff to generate somewhere on a scale of sixty or eighty study plans and have them submitted in a timely manner." The discursive legitimacy of resource agencies was rooted in law and linked to the constituency represented. One participant reminded others that his state "has independent regulatory authority and its own independent procedures for a 401 [water quality] certification."

Some tribes had authority to mandate license conditions for hydropower projects but lacked the appropriate resources to participate effectively in licensing. A representative of a tribal coalition noted that "we've got 25 FERC licenses due in the year 2026 . . . are we going to have the resources to effectively address that?" Tribes had two forms of discursive legitimacy: one rooted in their legal status as sovereign nations and another rooted in spiritual and cultural links to the natural environmental, as these comments from a tribe member suggest: "The river to us is a living body. It speaks to us. We pray to it. So we don't make a law to govern it; we make a law to be cooperative with our relatives in the universe."

NGOs had little authority except to make public comment. The availability of resources varied by organization, but most had few resources to dedicate specifically to relicensing. One NGO representative noted, "These little groups have absolutely no paid staff. This is all done with volunteer time, and people work very hard to get this done." Discursive legitimacy was rooted in the NGOs' role in the democratic process and their role in representing public and environmental interests, as seen in the words of a river advocate: "It is the very survival of humanity that is in the balance here, not the money that is being made by the owners . . . but the very life and the quality of life that we experience and will continue to experience and our grandchildren will continue to experience."

Arenas for Power

Power was used within the collaborative process to influence who participated, the nature of the process, and how the content of the discussions was framed, as summarized in table 2.

FERC influenced participation in the collaborative process by granting two coalitions status as presenters: the NRG and the IHC. FERC's public notice for the process included the proposals developed independently by these groups, and each was allowed to present its proposal during the first 11 public forums. FERC's process designated nearly half of the sessions as forums where tribal representatives had priority in speaking, which made tribal participation more likely from a cultural perspective. FERC also used its authority to design the collaborative process, reinforcing its legal authority to determine the final rules on licensing.

Table 2 Power in the FERC Collaborative Process

		ARENAS FOR POWER		
		Formal Authority	Resources	Discursive Legitimacy
PROCESS ELEMENTS	Participants	FERC grants NRG and IHC representatives status as presenters	Owners, agencies, attorneys, and consultants participate as part of their job duties / Public, NGOs, and tribes rely more on personal time and funds	Some tribes send chiefs / Some owners participate through their attorneys / Federal agencies are in a coalition with FERC
	Process Design	FERC frames the collaborative process as rulemaking / FERC splits meetings into tribal and public	FERC selects and pays for facilitator and meeting rooms	Tribes have designated meetings to present their concerns / IHC and NRG proposals are distributed and presented
	Content	FERC provides nine questions to frame the collaborative process / National Hydropower Association and California state agencies enter their licensing proposals into public record	Stakeholders invest varying amounts of time and effort in analysis and argument / FERC produces full transcripts of public meetings	Alternative proposals are entered into public record without public reading / Tribes emphasize natural and spiritual framing / Owners emphasize legalistic framing

FERC used its authority to frame the content of the collaborative process before the public meetings began by issuing a list of nine questions to be addressed, beginning with "Is a new licensing process needed?" While everyone anticipated that the answer would be yes, the question signaled FERC's willingness to openly address fundamental assumptions about hydropower licensing. Discussion was not limited to FERC's questions, but the list guided the comments of many participants. A few other parties used the authority of the process to try to reframe the content of the meetings. A group of state officials from California developed their own proposed licensing process and presented it at a public meeting to illustrate that state authority had not been sufficiently addressed in the IHC or NRG proposals. The deputy attorney general of California noted, "We support efforts to streamline the energy licensing process, but such streamlining should not be at the expense of state authority." The National Hydropower Association also created its own proposal for the licensing process and submitted it into the public record at a meeting.

The availability of human, time, and financial resources to participate in collaborative processes differed across participants. Hydropower project owners, attorneys, consultants, and representatives of state and federal agencies were able to participate in the process as part of their job duties, and their costs related to preparation and travel were reimbursed. Representatives of tribes and NGOs were less likely to have organizational resources available, and many relied on personal time and funds to help support participation. Regarding process design, FERC's access to resources allowed it to select the meeting locations, dates, and facilitators, further cementing its perceived ownership of the collaborative process. Resources also influenced the content of the meetings through the ability to analyze proposals and construct arguments to support preferred licensing procedures. Owners invested considerable resources in responding to FERC's questions and the proposals offered by the IHC and NRG groups. One owner sent six employees to a meeting, while another owner sent attorneys from a law firm retained to represent it in licensing. State agencies were strongly represented in states such as California, where hydropower was a significant environmental and energy issue, and less strongly represented in other states. NGOs were often represented by a single individual, and sometimes that individual represented more than one organization. Finally, FERC used its resources to create meeting records by arranging for court reporters to produce full transcripts of each meeting, offering a richer record of meeting content than meeting minutes could provide.

The collaborative process strengthened discursive legitimacy for some participants while neutralizing others. One effort to increase discursive legitimacy was through the selection of participants. Some tribes sent chiefs or elders with high status, and some owners sent their attorneys to emphasize the validity and importance of the messages presented by those organizations. With respect to participation, the federal agencies had successfully formed a coalition with FERC through the IHC, allowing them to present a united front and linking them closely to the party with greatest authority. Discursive legitimacy was also used with respect to process. FERC implicitly endorsed the IHC and NRG proposals by distributing them with its public notice and allowing them to be formally presented at meetings. In contrast, licensing process propos-

als generated by others were accepted for entry into the public record but were not presented or distributed. The collaborative process with separate forums designated for tribes increased the discursive legitimacy of these participants by linking to tribal traditions emphasizing civil and communal approaches rather than bureaucratic and judicial approaches to problems. Tribal leaders used this greater voice to frame the content of the discussion around the cultural and spiritual value of the natural resources affected by licensing. Their comments noted the incongruence of the rule of law with the natural world: "No single jurisdiction will ever have complete control of the salmon life cycle." Owners countered this effort by asserting the importance of rational, technical standards: "[The process] needs to encourage the use of neutral, objective decision criteria for assessing ideas, making decisions and resolving disputes."

Discussion

The case study illustrates how the proposed framework can be used to assess sources of power and how power is exercised during collaborative processes. This knowledge can be used to provide a more thorough understanding and evaluation of collaborative processes and their outcomes and to gather insights that can improve collaborative process design.

First, the multidimensional definition of power offered by the framework allows a richer understanding of the dynamics and outcomes of collaborative processes. The framework suggests that each participant in a collaborative process should be assessed on three dimensions of power to reveal relative strengths and weaknesses. This approach benefits not only researchers and observers but also participants in such processes by overcoming their self-serving biases in assessing power. Participants in collaborative processes may hold more limited definitions of power based on the sector and institutional realm to which they belong. For example, government agencies are likely to frame power in terms of legal authority because it is the type of power that they typically hold. Similarly, business organizations may frame power in terms of resources, and nonprofit organizations in terms of values and discursive legitimacy. Assessing participants across all three dimensions may support the recognition and reinterpretation of parties' abilities to influence the process. Kanter (1977) notes that power begets power and powerlessness begets powerlessness, reflecting that behavior is influenced by the attributions of power that people make about themselves and others. Conducting an assessment of power could reveal mistaken beliefs and hidden sources of power that may reduce overconfident, defensive, or domineering behaviors during collaborative processes.

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A process for such assessment could involve evaluating collaboration participants on the dimensions of power described in the framework (table 1) using a simple five-point scale. Sponsors or conveners could conduct such an evaluation initially, but in collaborations in which relationships have been established, participants could anonymously evaluate all parties, with results tallied and shared by a trusted neutral facilitator. In ongoing collaborations in which trust has been established, evaluations of power could be conducted more openly among participants guided by a facilitator. Alternatively, meeting notes or transcripts can be evaluated to gauge elements of

power such as frequency of participation by various parties and the pattern of content and process issues raised.

Second, the framework's rich view of power and the arenas in which it may be used are valuable tools for balancing power through the elements of the collaborative process. Leveling the playing field can make a collaborative process more representative and inclusive, and over time, it may promote perceptions of fairness that motivate broader participation in such processes. In the case study, FERC used its authority over process design to enhance the discursive legitimacy of tribes, which helped counter the resource power of owners and create more balanced participation. While FERC retained exclusive authority over process design, it sought to be inclusive and expand participation through its choice of geographically diverse meeting locations. FERC also allowed its content interests to be represented by the governmental IHC coalition rather than advocating for its own licensing proposal, and it offered the NRG coalition of owners and environmentalists equal status to the government coalition in presenting its licensing proposal at public meetings. These activities suggest some means by which public agencies that initiate collaborative processes can balance their own high levels of power to avoid dominating such proceedings. An additional opportunity for power balancing exists for conveners of collaborative processes, who can decide whether to retain the power to design the process or share this authority with other participants. Even though parties to collaboration usually expect some power differences, the goal of rebalancing power should be shared by all participants with a vested interest in the success of the collaboration, as those with low power can still block or severely delay implementation of agreed-upon solutions (Straus 2002). Parties may be content with a level of power that is commensurate with the amount of interest that they have in the collaborative agenda (Huxham and Vangen 2005); however, it may be in the best interests of collaboration participants to create incentives to motivate and empower less powerful participants because the relatively powerless have reason to be more controlling and coercive (Kanter 1977).

Finally, the power framework suggests strategies for enhancing power that are available to stakeholders participating in processes that they did not initiate or design. It can help identify means by which less powerful participants can be assured of equal access to the collaborative process. Coalitions are one means by which participation can be expanded, resources can be shared, and discursive legitimacy enhanced. In the case study, NGOs that allied themselves with hydroproject owners through the NRG enjoyed greater representation and discursive legitimacy than those that participated independently. Federal agencies without direct authority enjoyed similar benefits through their alliance with FERC in the IHC. Another means of enhancing power is for parties to explicitly frame the issues in terms of the values or ideals that are the basis of their discursive legitimacy, which both reinforces the party's legitimacy as a participant and challenges assumptions in the deep structure about how problems should be addressed. In the case study, Native American tribes used this approach to challenge the bureaucratic and technical perspectives that dominated discussion during public meetings.

The elements of power in a collaborative governance process are often intertwined, as when a participant uses discursive power to challenge the authority of the convener to establish the process design. Such a move might result in a negotiation that changes the structure of

meetings, participation, or the availability of resources to participants. Because power is an emergent phenomenon that is shaped by interaction, the static representation of power in table 1 is limited in its ability to describe ongoing power dynamics in a collaborative governance process. However, the power framework proposed here can be used to conduct multiple assessments over the course of a collaborative process to evaluate how power dynamics and perceptions are changing.

The power framework helps remedy the lack of tools available to determine when and how to use collaborative processes (Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary 2005; Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006). Assessing power can help stakeholders evaluate the dynamics of a process and develop a greater understanding of the ways in which parties can be privileged or marginalized in collaborative governance processes. The success of a collaborative process depends on achieving cooperative participation and sharing of power (Hardy and Phillips 1998). Greater attention to power can help in the design and implementation of processes that are more representative, inclusive, and impartial, and lead to greater empowerment within a democratic system.

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