

---

# Multi-stakeholder Partnerships (SDG #17) as a Means of Achieving Sustainable Communities and Cities (SDG #11)

Adriane MacDonald, Amelia Clarke, Lei Huang, Mark Roseland  
and M. May Seitanidi

---

## Abstract

As social and ecological problems escalate, involving stakeholder groups in helping solve these issues becomes critical for reaching solutions. The UN Sustainable Development Goal #17 recognizes the importance of partnerships and collaborative governance. However, organizing large multi-stakeholder groups (or partnerships) requires sophisticated implementation structures for ensuring collaborative action. Understanding the relationship between implementation structures and the outcomes is central to designing successful partnerships for sustainability. In the context of sustainable community plan implementation, the larger research project of which the results presented in this book chapter are one

---

For more information about the project see <https://uwaterloo.ca/implementing-sustainable-community-plans/>.

---

A. MacDonald  
Faculty of Management, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Canada  
e-mail: [adriane.macdonald@uleth.ca](mailto:adriane.macdonald@uleth.ca)

A. Clarke (✉)  
School of Environment, Enterprise and Development, University of Waterloo,  
Waterloo, Canada  
e-mail: [amelia.clarke@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:amelia.clarke@uwaterloo.ca)

L. Huang  
School of Business, The State University of New York at Fredonia, Fredonia, USA  
e-mail: [lei.huang@fredonia.edu](mailto:lei.huang@fredonia.edu)

M. Roseland  
Centre for Sustainable Communities, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada  
e-mail: [roseland@sfu.ca](mailto:roseland@sfu.ca)

M.M. Seitanidi  
Kent Business School, University of Kent, Kent, UK  
e-mail: [M.M.Seitanidi@kent.ac.uk](mailto:M.M.Seitanidi@kent.ac.uk)

part of, examines how stakeholders configure to achieve results. To date, we have the data from a survey completed by 111 local governments around the world. The survey was offered in English, French, Spanish, and Korean. Seventeen integrated environmental, social, and economic topics are considered, including climate change, waste, ecological diversity, and local economy. Despite the prevalence of sustainable community plan implementation in local authorities around the world, there is scant empirical data on the topics covered in these plans internationally, the partners involved in implementation, and the costs and savings to the local governments that implement in partnership with their communities. The results presented in this book chapter show that sustainable community plans continue to be created and implemented in a diversity of communities around the world, are integrated in the sustainability topics that they cover, involve local organizations as partners in implementation, act as motivators of resource investment by the local government in community sustainability, and result in savings for the local government.

---

**Keywords**

Sustainable community plans · Local Agenda 21 · Multi-stakeholder partnerships · Implementation structure · Outcomes

---

## 1 Introduction

*Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, is responsible for the promulgation of the term sustainable development (Dresner 2008). The report defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987, p. 43). *Our Common Future* was written following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972 (Mebratu 1998). The ideas underpinning sustainable development from the Stockholm conference and *Our Common Future* heavily influenced the agenda for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) (Mebratu 1998). It was at this conference in Rio de Janeiro that the influential Agenda 21 outcome document was created (United Nations 1992). Agenda 21 opens, in Chap. 1, 1.1 with the following quote:

Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our well-being. However, integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfillment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future. No nation can achieve this on its own; but together we can - in a global partnership for sustainable development (United Nations 1992, p. 1).

This quote embodies the global sustainable development challenges as they are now and as they were in 1992. It highlights the urgency of global environmental and social disparities that underpin the world's environmental and development challenges. It also charts a path forward, identifying partnerships as a way to sustainable development. In 2015, 43 years after the Stockholm conference, 28 years after *Our Common Future*, 23 years after Agenda 21, and 3 years after *The Future We Want*, seventeen Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted (United Nations 2015a). These goals are meant to address the seventeen most pressing global sustainable development challenges faced by our world today. Among them are SDG #1 to end poverty in all its forms everywhere; SDG #13 to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; SDG #11 to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; and SDG #17 to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (United Nations 2015a). The global problems that stand between where humanity is today and the future we want are the key macro drivers behind the sustainable development goals of countries around the world (United Nations 2015b).

Agenda 21 was the primary outcome document of Earth Summit; it is called on the world's nations to partner in a global pursuit for sustainable development (United Nations 1992). Agenda 21 outlines a plan of action for sustainable development at the global, national, and local levels (United Nations 1992). 178 governments that attended the Earth Summit adopted Agenda 21 (United Nations 1992). The problems addressed in Agenda 21 span the globe, and so the recommended policies and plans are broad in scope. To make Agenda 21 relevant at a community scale, a local approach called Local Agenda 21 (LA21) that addresses the specific needs of individual local governments was recommended (Bond et al. 1998). Participatory processes that involve stakeholders as partners throughout the development, implementation, and oversight of LA21 plans were encouraged by the United Nations and ICLEI (ICLEI 2002). By 2012, there were over 10,000 Local Agenda 21s (or equivalent) initiatives around the world (ICLEI 2012). In coherence with SDG #17, multi-stakeholder partnerships continue to be part of the solution, and are mentioned throughout the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III 2016).

The Local Agenda 21 process, and the sustainable community plans (SCPs) that commonly result from this process, is a growing global phenomenon (ICLEI 2012). The results presented in this book chapter provide further evidence that SCPs show recent growth as over 60% of the SCPs represented in our sample are under 5 years. However, little is known about SCPs implemented through multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly from an international perspective. The aim of this research is to address this gap by providing empirical data from around the world on SCPs implemented through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Based on our data, the results presented in this book chapter identify common sustainability topic areas covered in SCPs. These findings indicate that globally communities are prioritizing waste, energy, and water issues. The results also signify that many local governments are working in partnership with organizations in their communities to implement their SCPs, according to our data 56.7% of the local governments surveyed have over

11 partners. This indicates that internationally local governments see value in partnerships and stakeholder engagement for both the formation and implementation of their SCP. To this point, the results of our study may also partially explain the value that local governments derive from implementing with partners. For example, our findings signify that local governments can acquire resources from partnership implementation. Our purpose in researching and presenting data on resources is to improve understanding not only about the resources required, but also about the resources leveraged through working with partners during implementation, including financial costs and savings, employee time, and volunteer time. In presenting this data, we hope to help local governments make informed decisions about how to implement SCPs.

This chapter provides background on SCPs and collaborative strategic management; introduces multi-stakeholder partnerships as a means of enabling community-wide actions; and discusses both partner and plan outcomes. This chapter provides an overview of the research done on structure and outcomes as part of a larger project on implementing SCPs (University of Waterloo 2016) to set the context, and then it introduces original research based on an international survey of 111 local governments. This chapter concludes by discussing how this data ties to the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

---

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Sustainable Community Plans (SCPs)**

Local governments are well acquainted with the complexity of addressing community-wide sustainability challenges (Roseland and Spiliotopoulou 2016). As mentioned there are about 10,000 LA21 initiatives worldwide addressing social, ecological, and economic issues through SCP implementation (ICLEI 2012). SCPs can include a wide range of topics, depending on what the community stakeholders (i.e., partners) decide to prioritize. A study that reviewed SCPs in Canada found that there are 17 dominant topic areas (Taylor 2012). Such topic areas include energy, land use, transportation, waste, air, water, education, health, safety, employment, and local economy (Taylor 2012). SCPs are created through a public consultation process whereby stakeholders determine the sustainability vision and goals for their community, and then implement the plan in partnership with local organizations (Clarke 2012).

### **2.2 Collaborative Strategic Management**

The process of collaborative strategic management in the context of community sustainability involves five stages. The first stage involves understanding the

stakeholder relationships with the community by assessing contextual considerations and forming the partnership (Clarke and Fuller 2010). During the second stage the collaborative strategic plan, in this case the SCP, is formulated by the partners. Plan formulation requires partners to work together in establishing their shared sustainability vision and goals for their community that will be reflected in the plan (Clarke and Fuller 2010). Implementation of the plan happens during the third and fourth stage of the process. Implementation of the plan is conducted at two levels, internally by partner organizations focusing on their individual sustainability actions, as well as collectively among partners focusing on community-wide sustainability actions (Clarke and Fuller 2010). In the final stage, outcomes of the SCP are realized by the partnership as a whole and by individual partners (Clarke and Fuller 2010). A collaborative strategic process such as the one defined here is iterative in nature. The process is continually evolving and changing with external and internal influences (Clarke and Fuller 2010).

### 2.3 Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

As mentioned SCPs are implemented in partnership with local organizations. These partnerships, called multi-stakeholder partnerships, typically involve two or more organizations from each of the private, public, and civil society sectors (MacDonald 2016). Multi-stakeholder partnerships are part of a broad class of partnerships called cross-sector social partnerships, whereby two or more organizations from all three sectors join to realize a mutual goal or to tackle a common problem (Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2011). For the multi-stakeholder partnerships discussed in this chapter, local organizations join to tackle the community sustainable development challenges outlined in their SCP (Freeman et al. 1996). Typical partners that participate in this type of partnership from the civil society sector include not-for profit organizations, local environmental groups, and neighborhood associations (Freeman et al. 1996). Organizations such as the chamber of commerce, local businesses, and industry associations often represent the private sector (Freeman et al. 1996). Finally, from the public sector are organizations such as local governments, schools/colleges/universities, development agencies, and energy utilities (Freeman et al. 1996). This way of implementing the SCP is recommended by the United Nations (ICLEI 2002) and coincides with SDG #17 (United Nations 2015a).

### 2.4 Implementation Structure

Previous research has identified two levels of implementation in multi-stakeholder partnerships: the partner level (Huxham 1993) and the partnership level (Brinkerhoff 1999). Implementation happens at both these levels simultaneously (Huxham 1993), though there is variance in how the partnership strategy is implemented at each level (Clarke 2014). At the partner level, efforts toward implementation are not

interorganizational (Hardy et al. 2003). Partners leverage their capabilities to help implement the strategic plan, often requiring partners to reallocate resources and/or change their policies (Waddell and Brown 1997). At this level, individual partners may develop internal structures for implementing the goals outlined in the strategic plan (Clarke 2011). For instance, a partner might commit to reducing greenhouse gases by adapting its internal processes, thus contributing to the overall goals of a climate action plan, or hire a sustainability coordinator to help the organization meet the internal sustainability goals it committed to the partnership (Clarke 2011).

The partnership level is the interorganizational framework that sustains partner engagement and, ultimately, ongoing implementation of the plan through the partnership (Albers et al. 2013; Hood et al. 1993). The partnership level includes mechanisms for governance and processes of implementation (Clarke 2010). Past research on the Canadian experience uncovers five key components at the partnership level that are required for the implementation of SCPs (Clarke 2012): (1) Oversight, plan implementation requires an oversight body such as a secretariat or a decision-making body; (2) Partner engagement, there should be mechanisms in place to engage key stakeholders; (3) Community-wide action, partners need to adopt their own sustainability initiatives to extend implementation beyond the local governments jurisdiction; (4) Communications, plan implementation should include mechanisms that connect partners and provide them with opportunities to learn; and (5) Monitoring and Measurement, it is imperative that the progress of the plan is monitored so that adjustments can be made in a timely manner (Clarke 2012).

## 2.5 Plan Outcomes

Plan outcomes represent progress made by the partnership and the partners on the goals outlined in the strategic plan (i.e., the SCP) and relate to specific topic areas like the ones discussed in Sect. 2.1 (Clarke and Fuller 2010). For example, the main goal of the climate action plans would be emissions reductions at the community level. When assessing the community's plan outcomes, the trend within each region itself is most important (Clarke 2011).

## 2.6 Partner Outcomes

Partner organizations involved in implementing an SCP collaboratively are important contributors, but they also benefit from engaging in the partnership. In a recent study on partner perceptions in the Canadian communities Hamilton, Montreal, Vancouver, and Whistler, partners attributed a number of gains in organizational resources to their involvement in the SCP partnership (Clarke and MacDonald 2016). Some of the resources identified by partners as outcomes of their involvement include networking opportunities, increased social capital with other partners and the community at large, gained knowledge in the area of sustainability, and improved reputation (Clarke and MacDonald 2016).

### 3 Methodology

In 2014, we conducted a survey of local governments around the world asking them to share information regarding their SCPs. The survey was distributed by ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), and was offered in English, French, Spanish, and Korean. An advantage to working with ICLEI is that they have direct access to a large sample of local governments that fit this study's criteria for participants. Study participants needed to be local governments that are implementing SCPs/initiatives through multi-stakeholder partnerships. 111 communities responded from six continents including Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. Table 1 outlines the percentage of respondents by continent.

The communities ranged in population from under 50,000 to over 5,000,001; with the largest percentage of respondents in the under 50,000 range. Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents representing different-sized communities/cities.

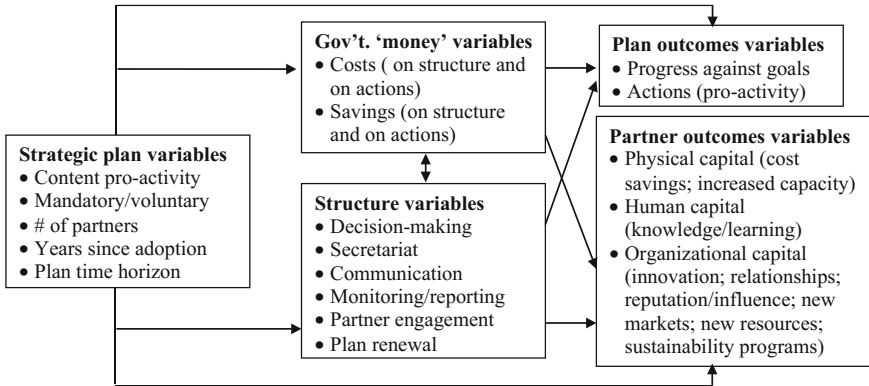
Survey respondents were asked to share information regarding their SCPs. In particular, they were asked several questions about the implementation structure of their partnership and about outcomes at different levels. Survey respondents were also asked to share general information about their SCPs, such as the age of the plan, the time horizon of the plan, and the topic areas included in the plan. Figure 1 summarizes the variables and relationships between variables that were studied in this research project.

**Table 1** Respondents per continent

Continent	Valid percent
Africa	2.7
Asia	15.3
Australia	10.8
Europe	6.3
North America	61.3
South America	3.6
Total	100.0

**Table 2** Percentage of respondents by population size

Population	Valid percent
Under 50,000	31.8
50,001–100,000	18.2
100,001–500,000	21.8
500,001–1,000,000	7.3
1,000,001–5,000,000	19.1
5,000,001+	1.8
Total	100.0



**Fig. 1** Variables and relationships being studied in the research project

In the dataset, we have detailed information about the most common structural elements within the partnerships in relation to communication systems, decision-making processes, role of the oversight entity, monitoring and reporting systems, partner engagement mechanisms, and the role of the secretariat. Due to space restrictions, they are not included in this chapter. The results represented in this chapter summarize our findings for the strategic plan variables and government money variables.

### 3.1 Limitations

Steps were taken to minimize the limitations of this study; however, there are some nuances of context, feasibility, and the phenomenon that the reader should consider when interpreting the results.

First, the partnerships studied in this research project are in the context of implementing SCPs. Across the partnerships studied, the partners share a geographic location, implement plans that include comparable topics, and implement with processes recommended by international agencies such as the United Nations. The main benefit of studying partnerships with comparable attributes is the ability to control for aspects that could otherwise influence the results; however, the drawback is that the generalizability of these results is perhaps limited to partnerships that implement SCPs.

The second challenge of this research is attributable to budget constraints. Our preference would have been to distribute the survey in additional languages, but we were limited financially to four translations. We consulted with ICLEI to determine which languages would reach the largest number of their members and determined that French, English, Korean, and Spanish would be the best choices. This decision allowed us to reach the largest number of ICLEI members, but limited us to survey participants who can fill out a survey in one of those four languages. Moreover,



the majority of cities participating in our research have been based on developed countries. While the results are likely generalizable to most developed countries, further study would be needed to see the generalizability to emerging economies and developing country contexts.

Finally, SCP multi-stakeholder partnerships are constantly adapting to their changing contexts (Kolk et al. 2008). For instance, many of these partnerships are closely tied to the local authorities as so they can be susceptible changes in political leadership. New partners joining or partners leaving the partnership can also have important implications for these partnerships, especially if the partner is significantly affected by or affects the ability of the partnership to meet its local sustainability objectives (Freeman et al. 2007). Thus the results of this study represent a cross-sectional analysis of one time frame, rather than a long-term narrative of SCP partnerships.

## 4 Results and Analysis

As represented in Fig. 1 we surveyed local governments to learn more about their SCPs. We asked participants about the maturity of the plan, the topics covered in the plan, and the number of partners involved in implementing the plan. The findings in our sample show that the majority of plans were under 8 years old. These findings indicate that SCPs are an emerging trend. Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Table 4 summarizes the 16 topics which were included in the SCPs. This information demonstrates that none of the topics were included in every plan; however, some were more common than others. It can also be noted that there is a distribution between environmentally, socially, and economically based topics, though commonality decreases, respectively. Regardless of this distribution, these findings show that the majority of the SCPs are highly complex and require efforts beyond the local government's role.

Table 5 indicates that in our sample almost all of the local governments are engaging with partners during plan implementation, though there is variance in the number of partners involved. This project is currently doing an in-depth study of

**Table 3** Maturity of the sustainable community plan

Years of implementation	Valid percent
0–2 years	32.4
3–5 years	27.9
6–8 years	19.8
9–11 years	5.4
12–14 years	6.3
15+ years	7.2
Not sure	0.9
Total	100.0

**Table 4** Percentage of SCPs that included a topic

Topic	Valid percent
Waste	84.7
Energy	82.9
Water	82.9
Climate change	78.4
Land use	72.1
Transportation	71.2
Air	57.7
Ecological diversity	56.8
Civic engagement	49.5
Employment	49.5
Housing	45.9
Social infrastructure	42.3
Safety (crime)	27.9
Food security	27.0
Poverty alleviation	25.2
Noise pollution	15.3

**Table 5** Number of partners in the partnership

Number of partners	Valid percent
0	9.3
1–5	25.9
6–10	8.3
11–20	9.3
21–50	13.0
51–99	5.6
100+	13.0
Not sure	15.7
Total	100.0

four partnerships with more than 100 partners to learn more about partner outcomes and ideal structural design.

This study also asked questions about the financial resources available and resources used by the local governments to create and implement the SCPs. When asked if the local government had a department/unit dedicated to sustainability initiatives, approximately 70% responded ‘yes’; and of particular relevance is that, of those, approximately 60% did not have that department/unit before creating the SCP. This finding indicates that these plans create accountability and act as motivators for progress on sustainability from the local government.

With regards to the number of full-time employees, Table 6 shows that the majority of respondents recorded 1–5 employees. When counting volunteers, as noted in Table 7, the majority of respondents recorded 1–20. This is in part due to the size of the communities, with almost half having a population of 100,000 or less

**Table 6** Number of local government employees supporting the SCP implementation

Number of full-time employees	Valid percent
<1	13.3
1–5	65.6
6–10	7.8
11–20	5.6
21–30	0.0
31–40	0.0
41–49	1.1
50–100	3.3
101–200	3.3
Total	100.0

**Table 7** Number of volunteers supporting the SCP implementation

Number of volunteers	Valid percent
0	21.8
1–20	43.5
21–40	10.2
41–60	7.7
61–80	0.0
81–100	3.8
100+	13.0
Total	100.0

**Table 8** Money questions

SCP outcomes	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Money saved from implementing internal sustainability initiatives	88	1	5	3.17	1.09
Additional funding attracted for community-wide sustainability initiatives from others	89	1	5	3.22	1.26
Financial or other resources contributed to the internal sustainability initiatives	91	1	5	3.10	1.08
Financial support contributed to the governance and/or administrative activities	92	1	5	3.08	1.12

(and therefore a small staff team for the entire local government). It is notable that almost all the communities surveyed had at least one full-time staff position dedicated to SCP implementation.

Table 8 shows the results of the ‘money questions’. On a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 being ‘None at all’ and 5 being ‘A significant amount’), respondents were asked about funding. Results show that while funds are being invested into the SCP, there are also funds invested by others, as well as savings.

Probably most importantly, the survey asked questions about the actions taken on the 16 topics, and the results achieved. Again due to room constraints this information is not included here. The project's next steps are to look at correlations between the variables to determine if certain structural features of the partnership design are critical for achieving sustainability progress. Preliminary analysis shows that proactive actions, monitoring and reporting, communications, partners helping implement, higher number of partners, and plan renewal are critical for sustainability progress (when considering all topics).

---

## 5 Policy Relevance

The information from this survey puts forth valuable insights into on-the-ground progress toward the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals; particularly number 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (United Nations 2015a). To achieve the specific actions within this goal by 2030, communities must be incorporating the relevant topics into the goals of their SCPs at present time, as many included time horizons of over 15 years. In addition, the information in this chapter can be considered for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda that was finalized at the third UN HABITAT conference. We provide a window into the current international situation on community sustainability planning. Further, the survey included a section regarding the integration of climate change mitigation into the respondent's SCPs which can feed into the climate change conversations as it relates to low-carbon urban development.

### 5.1 Implications

- There was a great uptake of Local Agenda 21s (and equivalent) post-1992. While LA21s are rarely discussed anymore, ICLEI's report prepared for Rio + 20 indicates that there are over 10,000 LA21 initiatives around the world (ICLEI 2012). The recent trend is toward silos again (climate change plans, energy plans, transportation plans, affordable housing plans, etc.) with discourse still paying reverence to holistic and integrated approaches. SCPs exist and are an excellent mechanism to further community-wide implementation of SDGs at the local level. They provide an umbrella strategy that goes beyond land use planning, and consider community-wide goals including, but also beyond, the local government's jurisdiction. That said, they require ongoing support to succeed.
- Given the silo approach, policy coherence between levels of government is more important than ever before. As national governments create climate strategies and invest in the transition to a low-carbon economy, investments should support lasting local sustainability progress. Likewise, local climate mitigation

and adaptation action plans should be action plans to implement sustainable community plans (and not instead of SCPs).

- SCP content could be reconsidered in light of the SDGs. There is considerable overlap, but not all plans address all topics, though most of the SDGs have local implications that could be included in a sustainable community plan.
- In terms of implementing SCPs, engaging partners is critical for making local sustainability progress. This has been statistically proven through an earlier study in this project. While this was found for all topics in one partnership, it was also found that certain structural features are more important when considering topics alone (for example, progress, on local economy goals).
- Also, the structure of the partnership is important. Engaging a large number of organizational partners from different sectors requires a sophisticated design with particular attention to serving the partners' needs as well as ensuring progress on sustainability goals. This research project provides concrete evidence of the importance of structure and offers best practices.

---

## 6 Conclusion

The complexity of the issues facing communities and cities today requires the involvement of government, as well as local businesses, non-governmental organizations, and citizens. In practice, the challenges for these collaborative initiatives are found in the structures of implementation. A wide variety of structures have manifested in an effort to best coordinate the collaborative nature required to implement a comprehensive plan, but until now little research has been done regarding the success of these structures.

The results from the larger study show that the design of the partnership is key to ensuring progress on community sustainability goals and to maintaining partner engagement. Design of the structural features (e.g., decision-making processes; role of the oversight entity, monitoring and reporting systems, communication systems, partner engagement mechanisms, and the role of partners) is critical for achieving desired outcomes. The results presented in this book chapter, which are a subset of results from a larger study, provide several insights about SCPs around the world. First, the findings signal that new SCPs are being created and implemented around the world and that many SCPs are prioritizing overlapping issues, such as waste, energy, and water. The topic area results also indicate that the issues covered in SCPs often integrate all three dimensions of sustainability. This type of overarching and holistic plan that considers the implications of local action from an integrated social, environmental, and economic perspective may be better positioned to achieve community-wide commitment and results. The wide spread uptake of SCPs and the integrated nature of the topics covered position these plans as a potential avenue for addressing the SDGs internationally at a local level. The finding that SCPs are being implemented by local level multi-stakeholder partnerships indicates

that local governments believe that stakeholder engagement through a partnership is an effective SCP implementation strategy. It supports the well-established notion that sustainability challenges reach beyond the capacity and jurisdiction of local governments alone (ICLEI 2012; Mercer and Jotkowitz 2000; Selsky and Parker 2005). The results that summarize resources invested versus resources gained indicate that while local governments are investing resources into SCP implementation they are also gaining resources through attracting investment and cost savings. In addition, the discovery that of the 70% of local governments that reported having a department/unit dedicated to sustainability initiatives, 60% formed the department/unit after developing their SCP. The implication of this finding is that the plans may create accountability and impetus for progress on sustainability from the local government. Moreover, SCPs may act as motivators of resource investment, as indicated by the findings about new units/departments, new sustainability job positions created, volunteers involved, and additional funding attracted from others.

Building on the findings in this study, there are several potential avenues for future research. First, researchers who are interested in the numeric costs and savings experienced by local governments that implement their SCP through partnerships might pursue research that uncovers financial costs compared to savings and investments attracted, to determine the costs and savings/investments balance. Other researchers interested in partners aside from the local government might study the financial cost savings versus investments experienced by different types of partners, including partners from both the private and civil society sectors. The results of such a study may uncover financial benefits to partners involved in implementing an SCP thereby making a stronger business case for engagement from a partner perspective. Finally, researchers interested in the sustainability outcomes and impacts of SCPs might assess whether financial resources invested and saved are related to progress on plan outcomes.

The research project highlighted in this book chapter continues to expand and is currently studying four large sustainability partnerships: Gwangju Council for Sustainable Development in Gwangju, Korea; Montreal Community Sustainable Development Plan in Montreal, Canada; The Bristol Green Capital Partnership in Bristol, UK; and Barcelona + Sostenible in Barcelona, Spain. Each of these partnerships has over 100 organizational partners. With this data we will be able to consider the relationships between the partnership level governance structure, the partner involvement (motivation, ongoing engagement, actions taken), and the resulting partner and plan outcomes. We are also studying the relevance of the results to local climate partnerships, and are continuing our analysis of the international surveys responses. The project has another 2 years of funding. We welcome new funding and research partners as we consider our future direction.

**Acknowledgements** Other team members on this research project have helped with the survey design and data collection, including Dr. May Seitanidi (University of Kent, UK), Dr. David Runnalls (University of Ottawa, Canada & CIGI), Megan Meaney (ICLEI Canada), and Denise Yoon (Korea Institute—Center for Sustainable Development, Korea).

University of Waterloo Research Assistants: Amanda Chouinard and Aisha Stewart.  
Funders for the survey presented in this chapter are Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and Mitacs.

---

## References

- Albers, S., Wohlgezogen, F., & Zajac, E. J. (2013). Strategic alliance structures: An organization design perspective. *Journal of Management*, 42(3), 1–33.
- Bond, A., Mortimer, K. J., & Cherry, J. (1998). Policy and practice: The focus of Local Agenda 21 in The United Kingdom. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 41(6), 767–776.
- Brinkerhoff, D. (1999). Exploring state-civil society collaboration: Policy partnerships in developing countries. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 28(4), 59–86.
- Clarke, A. (2010). *Implementing regional sustainable development strategies: Exploring structure and outcomes in cross-sector collaborations*. Doctoral dissertation. Desautels Faculty of Management, McGill University, Montreal.
- Clarke, A. (2011). Key structural features for collaborative strategy implementation: A study of sustainable development/Local Agenda collaborations. *Management & Avenir*, 50(10), 153–171.
- Clarke, A. (2012). *Green municipal fund. Passing go: Moving beyond the plan*. Ottawa: Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
- Clarke, A. (2014). Designing social partnerships for local sustainability strategy implementation. In A. Crane & M. Seitanidi (Eds.), *Social partnership and responsible business: A research handbook*. Routledge, London: Taylor & Francis.
- Clarke, A., & Fuller, M. (2010). Collaborative strategic management: Strategy formulation and implementation by multi-organizational cross-sector social partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94(1), 85–101.
- Clarke, A., & MacDonald, A. (2016). Outcomes to partners in multi-stakeholder cross-sector partnerships: A resource-based view. *Business and Society*. doi:10.1177/0007650316660534.
- Dresner, S. (2008). *The principles of sustainability*. London: Earthscan.
- Freeman, C., Littlewood, S., & Whitney, D. (1996). Local government and emerging models of participation in the Local Agenda 21 process. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 39(1), 65–78.
- Freeman, E., Harrison, J., & Wicks, A. (2007). *Managing for stakeholders: Survival, reputation, and success*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Habitat III. (2016). *Habitat III: New urban agenda*. Retrieved from <https://www2.habitat3.org/bitcache/99d99fbd0824de50214e99f864459d8081a9be00?vid=591155&disposition=inline&op=view>.
- Hardy, C., Phillips, N., & Lawrence, T. B. (2003). Resources, knowledge and influence: The organizational effects of interorganizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(2), 321–347.
- Hood, J. N., Logsdon, J. M., & Thompson, J. K. (1993). Collaboration for social problem solving: A process model. *Business and Society*, 32(1), 1–17.
- Huxham, C. (1993). Pursuing collaborative advantage. *The Journal of the Operational Research Society*, 44(6), 599–611.
- ICLEI. (2002). *Second Local Agenda 21 survey. Background paper No. 15*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved from <https://divinefreedomradio.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/sustainabledevelopment2nd-prepsession.pdf>.
- ICLEI. (2012). *Local sustainability 2012: Taking stock and moving forward*. Bonn: ICLEI.
- Kolk, A., van Tulder, R., & Kostwinder, E. (2008). Business and partnerships for development. *European Management Journal*, 26(4), 262–273.
- MacDonald, A. (2016). *Multi-stakeholder partnerships for community sustainability plan implementation: Understanding structures and outcomes at the partner and partnership*

- levels. Ph.D. Dissertation. School of Environment and Resource Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo.
- Mebratu, D. (1998). Sustainability and sustainable development: Historical and conceptual review. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 18(6), 493–520.
- Mercer, D., & Jotkowitz, B. (2000). Local Agenda 21 and barriers to sustainability at the local government level in Victoria, Australia. *Australian Geographer*, 31(2), 163–181.
- Parmigiani, A., & Rivera-Santos, M. (2011). Clearing a path through the forest: A meta-review of interorganizational relationships. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1108–1136.
- Roseland, M., & Spiliotopoulou, M. (2016). Converging urban agendas: Toward healthy and sustainable communities. *Social Sciences*, 5(3), 1–20.
- Selsky, J. W., & Parker, B. (2005). Cross-sector partnerships to address social issues: Challenges to theory and practice. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 849–873.
- Taylor, A. (2012). *Indicators, domains, and scoring methods for a Canadian community sustainability indicator framework*. Masters thesis. School of Environment and Resource Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo.
- United Nations. (1992). *Agenda 21*. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>.
- United Nations. (2015a). *Sustainable development goals. Sustainable development knowledge platform*. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.
- United Nations. (2015b). *General assembly agenda items 15 and 116*. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.1&Lang=E).
- University of Waterloo. (2016). *Implementing sustainable community plans*. Retrieved from <https://uwaterloo.ca/implementing-sustainable-community-plans/>.
- Waddell, S., & Brown, D. (1997). *Fostering intersectoral partnering: A guide to promoting cooperation among government, business, and civil society actors*. IDR reports. Boston, Massachusetts: Institute for Development Research.
- World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

## Author Biographies

**Dr. Adriane MacDonald** is an Assistant Professor of Policy and Strategy in the Faculty of Management at University of Lethbridge. She holds a Ph.D. in Social and Ecological Sustainability from University of Waterloo. Her research interests include multi-stakeholder partnerships, outcomes of multi-stakeholder partnerships, implementing community sustainability plans, and sustainable cities.

**Dr. Amelia Clarke** is an Associate Professor in the School of Environment, Enterprise and Development (SEED) at the University of Waterloo, Canada, where she is also Director of the Master of Environment and Business (MEB) program. She leads the team research project described in this chapter. For more information on the project see <https://uwaterloo.ca/implementing-sustainable-community-plans/>. Dr. Clarke holds a Ph.D. in Management (Strategy) from McGill University. Her research is focused on collaborative strategic management, cross-sector partnerships, sustainable development strategies, implementing sustainable community plans, environmental management, green economy, and youth-led social entrepreneurship. Her articles have appeared in journals such as *Journal of Business Ethics*; *Journal of Cleaner Production*; *Business & Society*; *Organizations & Environment*; *Futures*; *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*; and *Sustainable Development*.



**Dr. Lei Huang** an Assistant Professor of Marketing at the School of Business in the State University of New York at Fredonia holds a Ph.D. in Marketing from McGill University. Dr. Huang's research interests relate to social marketing corporate social responsibility, food marketing, cause-related marketing, and sustainability. His work has been published in both academic journal articles and practitioner reports. Dr. Huang worked in the creative side of strategic marketing management before joining academia.

**Dr. Mark Roseland** is Professor of Planning in the graduate School of Resource and Environmental Management and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. He has also served as Chief City Planner for a municipality in metropolitan Vancouver. Dr. Roseland lectures internationally and advises communities and governments on sustainable development policy and planning. As well, he is leading development of Pando[Sustainable Communities, an international collaboration network for sustainable communities researchers and practitioners.

**Dr. M. May Seitanidi** is Associate Professor of Strategy at Kent Business School, University of Kent. She is a Visiting Fellow at the International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (ICCSR) at Nottingham University Business School, University of Nottingham and Visiting Professor in CSR at LUISS Business School, Rome, Italy. Her work for over 20 years, as a practitioner and academic, focused on all types of crosssector social interactions, previously on philanthropy and socio-sponsorship and currently on social partnerships. She is the founder of the Hellenic Sponsorship Centre (1994), the magazine "Sponsors and Sponsorships" (1995) and the "Annual Review of Social Partnerships" (2006) promoting cross-sector collaboration for the social good. In 2007 she founded the International Symposia Series on "Cross Sector Social Interactions" (CSSI). Books include: *The Politics of Partnerships* (2010); *Social Partnerships and Responsible Business. A Research Handbook* (2014); and *Creating Value in Nonprofit- Business Collaborations: New Thinking & Practice* (2014).