BRIEFING NOTE

LEARNING JOURNEY

Political parties and public policymaking processes: The role of multistakeholder dialogue

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Political parties and public policymaking processes: The role of multistakeholder dialogue

This note gathers the main reflections deriving from the Learning Journey on public policymaking and the role of multistakeholder dialogue in this arena, jointly organized by the United Nations Development Program and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy. This Journey was carried out in Antigua Guatemala in November 2007, and the group of 30 participants included political leaders, researchers, analysts, academics, former government officials and donors with relevant experience, interest and knowledge on political parties and policymaking. Some important experiences in Latin America were explored, and inputs on the interaction between the party system and the public policymaking system were generated. This note intends to share these inputs with the actors of the political system and the practitioners of dialogue and other like-minded tools, in the hopes that improvements introduced in the public policymaking process are sustainable and have an impact on development and on the life of people.

I. Initial frame for reflection

In activities carried out in preparedness for the Journey, participants shared the following reference points for the reflection work:

- Dialogue processes may be categorized as one of the democratic tools that favor transparency, public participation and inclusion, and should be seen as tools that complement and strengthen democratic institutions without replacing them. Dialogue processes have shown their value in building channels for communications and conflict transformation, which are necessary for the survival of democratic systems.

- There are various policymaking models. The technical model intends to convince public policy makers based on the analysis of correct measures. The political influence model seeks to co-opt actors to participate in some commonplace measures. The social movement model tries to convert other actors to a vision around which the movement is organized. The collaborative model seeks the joint evolution of stakeholders towards an understanding, a direction, and a set of common rules.

- After accumulating experience in public policymaking and implementation for several years in Latin America, the following questions pose a challenge for the region: Why are some public policies successful and others not? Under what conditions? Why do some reforms persist while others fail in similar contexts? What allows a country to adjust its policies to tackle with change or address former failures? What determines the capacity of the countries to design, approve and implement effective public policies or sustain them in time?

- Dialogue, as a democratic tool that favors transparency, inquiry and reflection, as well as public participation and inclusion that strengthen democratic institutions, may play a decisive
role in improving the quality and effectiveness of policy-making and implementation processes. Multistakeholder dialogue allows for learning about, discussing and recognizing diverse perspectives. Broader and shared understanding of current realities allows for reaching more sustainable agreements for the promotion and implementation of public policies.

II. Introductory perceptions on dialogue and public policies

Xavier Michon, Country Director of UNDP Guatemala, proposed an initial issue: according to the Report on Democracy in Latin America, despite increasing democracy levels in the region, a certain dissatisfaction prevails in that democracy has not been accompanied by improved equality strategies and with respect to the role of actors participating in dialogues, particularly political parties. It is well known that democracy cannot exist without political parties but there are no political parties without democracy. Multistakeholder dialogue on agreed on and legitimate bases, used as a tool to strengthen and advance the democratic process, is evidently necessary.

On his part, Roel von Meijenfeldt, Executive Director of the NiMD, stressed the importance for democratic development of building trust among all involved actors; thus the importance of dialogue processes for democratic functioning, engaging stakeholders in transformation processes. Dialogues should be inclusive in order to be successful, sustainable and yield legitimate policies. For von Meijenfeldt, dialogue is an “open and inclusive process where communication is based on mutual respect and which main objectives are: encourage listening, learning and problem solving. And he emphasizes that in order to be able to transform agendas into public policies, the third dimension – problem solving– is a challenge.

Álvaro Pinto, Regional Coordinator of the NiMD for Latin America, shared the history of NiMD in Guatemala with the participants, and how it created the multiparty tool with the idea of making dialogue possible among political parties in order to find a common denominator and jointly undertake the responsibility to design and implement public policies for the elaboration of proposals within the frame of the National Shared Agenda. He indicated that it is vital to put dialogue within the context of the current political social juncture in order to avoid serious consequences in terms of political unrest, as well as tensions within and outside the country.

The group of participants proceeded to share participatory experiences in public policymaking and identified some critical issues in these processes. The implemented dynamic yielded the following inputs that may be considered in future dialogue processes for public policymaking:

“It is important to insist on the relationship among dialogue, political parties and public policy making and emphasize ‘the reason for’ dialogue in order for it to aim at policies that will be applied. Therefore, actors must be representative and legitimate. Dialogue should conclude in something, apply that something and contribute to democratic governance; it should be influential and applicable through policies. Dialogue must be capable of converging State branches for the proposed discussion”.

“Dialogue takes time and there is pressure for instant solutions, generating tensions between legitimacy and the delivery of solutions. We must, therefore, fix our attention on problem solving and on capacity development for dialogue, move towards public policy making, and deal with the tension between legitimacy and results in an extremely short term”.

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III. Inaugural conference

Gustavo Porras Castejón, political analyst and former Private Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic of Guatemala, gave a conference on Social Dialogue, Political Pacts and Governance.

Gustavo Porras summarized the topic to be addressed in the following questions: How can social dialogue translate into concrete results, political pacts and into the implementation of public policies? What type of social dialogue is required to achieve results? What would its composition and methodology be?

He explained that these questions may be answered in various dimensions, as in politics form is substance. Dialogues may generate public policies as a result but under a key organization that takes into account some aspects, such as the following:

- Interlocutors present in dialogues. A key element in order to obtain results is that participants in dialogues represent concrete, live sectors with specific demands; that they be valid and representative interlocutors. The problem arises when sectoral representatives are overrated, as in the case of NGOs taking on certain prominence without actually representing valid sectors. The ideal situation is for interlocutors to be forceful and influential in contributing and monitoring agreements, therefore avoiding dialogue initiatives that delay public decision-making because they do not address or involve key actors.

Participants’ reactions

- New leaderships are needed in order for them to represent and be representative. Part of the key is to oxygenate leaders and social leadership. Therefore, society (dialogue participants) should introduce new leaderships. I agree on the need to generate legitimacy in order for consensus to become political decisions.

- It is not that NGOs have nothing to do but rather that they have their own functions. They need to contribute to legitimate and representative sectors. The private sector recognises the need to strengthen the trade union movement, as they need valid interlocutors in order to overcome casuistic dialogues.
Interlocutors should be knowledgeable of the themes or else get support from specialized consultancies, as thorough knowledge thereof is truly required. Therefore, interlocutors must be representative of sectors that analyze problems dialectically and capable of building strategies. Strategies entail setting priorities, as the ideal situation would be to reach a full agreement, but this is not possible. In the natural order of things, it is not possible to escape a problem without falling into another. The definition of a strategy needs to be based on an accumulation of citizen demands, which response would require full knowledge of the facts and the theme around which dialogue revolves.

- Clear rules. Dialogue needs clear rules; otherwise, it generates dissatisfaction. Dialogues are not popular assemblies and, in general, they are not binding. In fact, it is not possible for them to be binding, as this would debase the institutional scheme. Usually, civil society is consulted and its opinions considered when presented as a result of consensus, which is highly complicated in political terms.

An example of social dialogue or social pact translated into a political pact was the experience of President Miguel de la Madrid in Mexico. On that occasion, the representation fulfilled the basic characteristics, as there was broad trade union representation. These organizations had the capacity to contribute to and monitor the fulfillment of the agreement. On the other hand, it was fundamental to have the President of the Republic preside over the dialogue, a fact that was possible due to the participating interlocutors. This example highlights the importance of assessing who should and who should not be in a dialogue.

- Avoid casuistic dialogues. Efforts towards casuistic dialogues not related to agreements or political measures should be avoided. Nevertheless, dialogues cannot be binding; they can exert influence through the political weight of the actors involved, as their points of view cannot be ignored even if they are not linked with an institutional and/or political structure.

A negative experience evinced in casuistic dialogues is that in some cases the agendas proposed are not congruent with the actors.
Moreover, casuistic dialogues could become a way for authorities to avoid their responsibility. Seeking consensus where there is none is the best form of eluding a policy that authorities do not wish to implement.

- **Knowledge generation.** The generation of mutual knowledge and meeting spaces that could not be generated on their own is an important result for the society, as it allows for gathering diverse actors holding multiple prejudices that, as a rule, are overcome in these safe spaces. In this sense, dialogues may be pertinent even if they lack the necessary characteristics to influence public actions.

- **Credibility in dialogues.** An essential element in a dialogue process is the degree of credibility granted to it. For instance, the dialogue around the Peace Agreements in Guatemala was convenient both for the government and the private sector; however, this did not guarantee the resolution of the problem. It was necessary to have a government not directly linked with any of the actors involved in the conflict.

Porras then shared the initiative currently promoted by the nIMD in Guatemala in order to overcome the casuistic aspect of dialogues, supporting the idea of creating a Social an Economic Council (CES) in Guatemala under the principles of the CES of such countries as Spain, the Netherlands and, more recently, Latin American countries - but responding to particular national characteristics. In countries with CES presence, government does not ignore its recommendations because the CES has legitimate representativeness in the society, as it is based on legitimate representatives of workers and employers. Its reason for being is public policymaking and monitoring development plans, without infringing existing institutionality. CES members have stability and the opportunity to become professional through first level counseling and access to reliable information sources, which grants certain professionalism to dialogue.

In the particular case of Guatemala, the working and trade-union class has particular characteristics, as it does not carry the same political weight as in other countries. The peasant sector is important in this country; thus the challenge of organizing the CES with sufficient representativeness in order for it to exercise certain political-social direction. One form currently

- It is required to develop democratic culture among the citizens. In order to reach agreements at a time of polarization and crisis, a minimum degree of democratic culture is required. In these cases, leadership behavior is decisive. The search for agreements that mean concessions is essential. It is possible to develop a certain democratic culture but it must be accompanied by an attitude of control and mechanisms that ensure that the policy will not become a culture of corruption.

- The media define priorities, impose public agendas in the collective mind, encourage and create or discourage certain leaderships. Dialogues have been seen as mechanisms that substitute public decision-making; on the other hand, we are a fragmented society. How can we deal with an environment not prepared for dialogue and an unconsolidated political class?

- It is important to differentiate between making commitments and making dialogue results binding. Not all commitments can be legally mandatory. In the case of Guatemala, it must be noted that Peace Agreements are not binding; nevertheless, a correlation of forces was assembled to influence their fulfillment. Some aspects of the Peace Agreements show progress but others entail structural changes that have not advanced; for instance, the fiscal theme.

- In Guatemala, politics needs to recover the power it has lost. Government and politics cannot be another actor in dialogues. Truth cannot be the result of an average of a multistakeholder group. The power structure has a reason for being. A pact between elites is needed. It is required to impose basic measures that will never be an output of consensus. It is necessary to recognize that governance depends of decisions on the fiscal theme.
analyzed for handling this situation is to advance specific agreements to alliances and thence to political agreements. In Guatemala, it is necessary to negotiate on a permanent basis in order to achieve political direction and governance. Alliances are needed to govern, and political agreements provide a real basis for continuity.

Porras concluded by saying that the relationship between the political system as a whole and the population is vital in order to achieve governance in Guatemala, as civil awareness is rising as well as the populations’ dissatisfaction with the political system. The political system does not offer what the citizen would like; and so the agreements and political pacts cannot remain in the Congress of the Republic but should be expanded and exercised for the benefit of the population. Dialogue interlocutors and the authorities that convene and promote the dialogues should generate credibility in light of the expectations of the population.

IV. Country cases

Concrete experiences of dialogue and public policymaking processes in Bolivia, Guatemala and México were presented. Guido Riveros Franck and Antonio Franco presented the Bolivian case: The Multistakeholder Dialogue in the Constitutional Assembly. Two cases were presented for Guatemala. One referred to Plan Visión País and was presented by José Ángel López and Álvaro Pop; the other was in charge of Miguel Ángel Balcárcel and dealt with the Shared National Agenda and the Departmental Agendas. With respect to Mexico, Demetrio Sodi, Mara Hernández and Diego Antoni presented the case of the Electoral Reform.

The main findings and lessons learned that were highlighted by the speakers based on the concrete experience of their individual countries are found below.

The rules of the game must be clear from the onset in order to overcome distrust. In many instances, dialogues are rather consultation mechanisms to improve governance.

It is required to let the conditions mature, take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalisation processes and the generation of capital, and work needs to be done in order to create the conditions required for international investment. The media is essential for creating conditions and for a mature political development.
**BOLIVIA: the multistakeholder dialogue in the Constitutional Assembly**

- Bolivia concludes year 2007 with a new State Political Constitution that, although politically questioned by the opposition, could be ratified by popular referendum. The central points addressed by assembly members coincided with critical themes in national and regional politics: discussions around the country’s capital and regional autonomies, the hierarchy of state powers, among others, all of which led the Constitutional Assembly to moments of blocking and confrontation that transcended the premises and mobilized the country’s social and civic movements.

- This new institutional order is the outcome of arduous and long processes that included instances of serious confrontations and intense negotiations that revealed the overbearing need of the Bolivian society, including the state, political parties and diverse social movements, to generate legitimate spaces for dialogue and consensus-building that go beyond traditional forms of political confrontation.

- It is fundamental to build spaces of trust with the main political parties, and thereafter generate broader spaces for dialogue.

- The role and influence of information and the press should be carefully considered from the onset of any dialogue process.

- These processes need to be multistakeholder in order to be successful.

- Dialogue spaces should be expanded to other sectors.

- Political parties in crisis are the most adequate tools for trying to promote processes oriented to seeking and contributing channels and solutions related to governance in the country.

- It is important to continue with the ongoing and deep analysis of the multiparty issue.

- It is vital to work for a strengthened political system with true internal democracy, with possibilities of transformation.

- It is important to promote the participatory movement.

- As stated in the report The State of opinion: Bolivian citizens, the Constitution and the Constitutional Assembly (UNDP, 2007): “behind the visions and polarizing practices on the State, the future crisis detected in the Bolivian society in recent years is giving way to the progressive consolidation of a series of common elements that make up a new Bolivian ideology around themes as diverse as laws, democracy, natural resources, the nation or the autonomies”. 70% of Bolivians are united by a vision that aspires to common change, which the political game has yet to live up to.
It was a first experience for the private sector in the formulation of initiatives for a country plan.

The countries where political parties have given up part of their truth and agreed to a National Plan for the short, medium and long term are those which have achieved better life conditions for their populations.

Preceding this effort is: the Peace Agreements, Visión Guatemala, and the Fiscal Pact.

Political parties had significant participation in the process.

Group vision: *To achieve a political pact that, respecting actors’ ideological and political differences, will reach a national agreement that ensures the continuity of public policies in the long term*.

An Accompanying Group, which main role was to facilitate reaching the pact, accompanied the main actors of the process: the political parties.

The signatories of the agreements promise to implement all issues agreed on in a sustainable manner, whether from the government or the opposition level.

The themes were identified through dialogue with the political parties: education, rural development, security and justice, health, multiculturality and indigenous populations, macro economy and fiscal approach. These themes were addressed and discussed in Carpenter Workshops.

In our country, as in Latin America, it is necessary to develop efforts oriented to assist political parties in recovering their legitimacy and to strengthen institutionality. Along these lines of interest, priority was granted to political parties with representation in the Congress of the Republic with a view to developing prioritized themes in this space.

The process allowed for recognizing that political parties must generate internal discussions, as the weaknesses of political parties were visualized in the exercise.

A highly stressful incident related to the process was the fact that, although political parties had approved the documents after their experts had revised them, most political parties abstained from supporting the agreements publicly when these reached Congress. On the other hand, agreements on the Country Vision generated protests from some civil society instances.

All of the above raises the need to rethink the dialogue mechanisms being followed. Where does the break up between agreed on issues and their fulfillment occur? What purpose does dialogue serve? We recognize it is useful, but for what?
The Shared National Agenda (ANC) was a multipartisan effort for Guatemala of the 21st Century. Efforts were developed in 2002, one year prior to the electoral process then. Strong resistance was met, as a result of the implicit interest in rescuing the commitments of the Peace Agreements and the need to interpret national reality. To achieve the latter, the UNDP Human Development report was used. On the other hand, the nMID contributed its experience as a Dutch society in the political practice of negotiation.

Nevertheless, it was possible to elaborate the ANC, and the most important result was building trust and respect, the latter being the most important. It should be born in mind that what is developing are processes that allow for recognizing important capacities in the other to the extent that national reality is unveiled. Common ground is discovered beyond personal positions. It is there where a turning point in the development of a dialogue process of dialogue becomes evident.

Representative people were involved, not representatives of society. Sharing was highly enriching in order to achieve trust and respect and overcome trenches.

The sense of process should be clear, beginning with the facilitators. The inflection in the curve should be identified: up to where is it necessary to intensify learning in order to achieve commitment?

The ANC was attached to the commitments pledged in the Country Vision. Some leaders expressed that the ANC contained the what of national development but the how is not developed yet. It constitutes the vision for the 21st century. Showing the most significant progress in the Country Vision was the security issue, as technical teams had been working on that theme in the Permanent Forum of Political Parties, and this interest had allowed certain actors of political parties to acquire some expertise.

At the departmental level, the exercise of departmental agendas started with the identification of efforts previously developed to elaborate departmental agendas. In those former processes, political parties were left outside, which gave us some leverage in our work.

Why work these processes in multiparty terms?

Outgoing Congress member: I am sure that if I had not participated in the ANC process, as well as in other dialogue processes, I would not have been able to perform as well as I have in my capacity of congress member. I have come to realize that having a methodology has been fundamental. We have a low intensity citizenship and a permanent mistrust of the other. The politicians' shortsightedness prevents them from understanding the results of dialogue spaces, such as Country Vision. This methodology activates thinking, generates trust and strategy for the future, it does not stop at games and processes. Events of this type have generated processes around which the country has moved and sectoral mental maps have been surmounted.

Incoming Congress member: The methodology has helped me to leave the trenches. With respect to outputs, confidence and respect were more important than the text and the discourse.

The central output of the process for elaborating the ANC consisted in modifying practices and behaviors; the process brought about a cultural change through the discussion of themes such as the inclusion or not of the agrarian reform, which for some sectors is essential while it has no space for others.

The processes are a challenge to facilitation, as they must be adapted to what each group desires, and it is necessary to support them from their own autonomy. Therefore, it was possible to observe the characteristics inherent to each population at the departmental level. In dialogue processes, strong groups sustainable in time are appraised. Also observed was people's commitment; they dreamed of hugging each other and of meeting again at the end of the campaign.

The need to establish inter-partisan communication channels was identified, as well as to build the political ideology beyond the programmatic aspect.

The great effort of multistakeholder dialogues is to have an impact on cultural change through practices and behaviors, and advance from confrontation to collaboration without renouncing the essence of each political organization.
The history of Mexico is a history of consensus. There have been real power factors that form part of the system. Congress was more representative in the past and government’s priority was to seek consensus, negotiating even with the most radical groups. Dialogue and representation have always been an option.

A process develops after 1988 in which civil society plays a highly important role, especially in a profound electoral reform. Civil society creates a great movement of electoral watch with members of the academic sector and political parties, and a national agenda is opened.

Dialogue was used as a relief of important themes. Dialogue stops once the urgency is over.

The Mexican system lets things follow their course, is not in a hurry. In Mexico, Congress is the centre of debate. Dialogue takes place between the Executive and the Legislative Branches. The 3 main parties implement the agenda. And some themes are gradually included in the priority agenda, not all at once.

The media has abused. In the electoral reform, Congress showed the media that they actually have no significant power. The media has a certain impact on society’s way of thinking but do not change it radically.

There is modest civil society participation and no strong national organizations (ecologists, consumers, etc.). There are no citizen groups with interlocutory capacity to interact with government, the legislative branch or the parties. The system forces them to reach agreements. It is rather pragmatic politics. This leads to political stability.

Changing towards a semi-presidential system is being considered. The system is not efficient but it is a governable country with permanent dialogue among political forces. But the Priista proficiency has been lost, and so Congress discusses how to make a more efficient division of powers. The question of how to facilitate agreements between the Executive and Legislative Branches is in the air. Here, civil society can have a role.

Social investment is high in Mexico but economic development needs to be strongly promoted. For some, this situation relates to the absence of electoral reforms and perhaps it could be ascribed to weakness on the part of government, which has lost its capacity for concertation.

Each country has its own agenda and the Mexican agenda does not require a great national agreement or civic pact. It needs a more efficient agenda with concrete modifications, such as the President’s partial veto, the possibility of presidential initiatives. Agendas should be well defined to allow for implementation.

The paradox in Mexico is that multipartisan dialogue has dropped to the extent that democracy has advanced.

With respect to political will and the situations in which formal actors are prepared to open up to non-governmental actors, 3 conditions are identified: of crisis (the formal state lacks control of force and needs to dialogue with the other in order to survive); factual political powers (within civil society); and, most interesting, the articulation of non-governmental actors (it is in the interest of formal institutions to approach these sectors). PRI achieved the latter. In this sense, this provides a clue to the paradox.

In Mexico, the democratization process has generated large power dispersion and civil society has lost its articulation, its articulation capacity has been brutally diminished. The challenge for Mexico is to recover this convergence, and it will not be easy to learn how to do it in horizontal structures.

With respect to trust as a condition for dialogue, the moments of dialogue are opportunities in which to build trust, something actors do not always understand, and so they themselves contribute to the failure of what they start. Civil society has fallen behind with respect to the political class and, as a result, its capacity for interaction towards building the capacity to build trust is questionable. Civil society is in crisis due to dispersion and distrust. A disagreement among formerly powerful social actors, a distance with respect to political parties. This becomes a constraining factor in decision-making.

UNDP accompanies national dialogue and political parties have shown enormous resistance to dialogue, as they believe that electoral reform has been included in the agenda; there is a strong historical resentment.
Participants’ reactions

- In Guatemala, ingovernance begins with lack of State resources.

- To reflect around the theme of dialogue, we have to place ourselves in national contexts and see how different societies, i.e. Andean societies, respond as a system from democratic institutionality.

- Political conscience is increasingly growing in many of our countries. There is interest in restructuring the State from the local level under different approaches. Local leaderships are emerging. Consequently, the question is: in what direction are we going to lead them? And the answer should be: towards political parties. This would be the most useful course, in terms of democratic development. Political parties should approach the local level to be oxygenised through the incorporation of new leaderships.

- No effort can continue to ignore political parties, nor can political parties ignore society expressions.

- Civil society should respond by participating in dialogue processes in order to advance on equal opportunities. We have worn out “dialogue” and, as a result, the current belief is that it does not yield results. All actors with power could share their own agenda. On the other hand, dialogue spaces should strengthen institutionality.

- Dialogue is not separated from the basic theme of politics, which is the correlation of forces. This is a central theme.

V. Challenges and potentials of multistakeholder dialogue in public policymaking: a prospective view from politicians, analysts and donors

Participants exchanged criteria with respect to bringing dialogue to the arena of public policymaking and implementation, and conversations revolved around power imbalances, dialogue viability, and the overbearing need to strengthen political parties using dialogue as the tool to achieve it. Please find below a summary of the main conclusions formulated by the group, organized in four themes:

- multistakeholder dialogue and public policy
- contribution of dialogue to political parties’ daily practice
- condition to develop an effective dialogue
- objects and fields of dialogue in public management
Multistakeholder dialogue and public policy

- Public policymaking is based on the knowledge of reality. To that effect, it is required that public policy-makers carry out participatory consultation processes. These processes may include multistakeholder dialogue.
- Multistakeholder dialogue processes may originate other processes, such as the creation of favourable conditions for public policy-making processes.
- It is required to visualise the limits of multistakeholder dialogue, which should not be a tool for the political decision phase.
- Coherence is required in the different phase of dialogue processes, from convening to implementation and follow up.
- It is recommended that governments take on the responsibility of convening dialogue processes for public policymaking, as they will be in charge of implementing such policies. Convening may also be done through political parties, which would facilitate the continuity of long-term policies.
- It is most useful to take departure in a proposal for initial discussion, and a multistakeholder dialogue should not initiate in a void. The process should include technical experts with political relevance.
- Emphasis should always be placed on the opportunity for convening, analysing the context and the circumstances.
- In some countries it is required to reassess the theme of dialogue and address it with more responsibility.
- From the onset, multiple actors should make the commitment to implement public policy (resources, financing).
- The convening party may act as guarantor and provide follow up to the fulfilment of agreements.

Contribution of dialogue to political parties’ daily practice

- Multistakeholder dialogue contributes to political parties’ daily practice in various aspects: i) it generates certain balance in the correlation of forces among political actors; ii) it underpins learning, as a space that allows for expansion and the consideration of diverse perspectives that may serve as raw material to decision makers; iii) it facilitates active listening among different actors, which contributes to change attitudes and generates a certain degree of citizen maturity in recognizing other interests and needs in competence.
- Multistakeholder dialogue is a valuable tool in solving crises, and it may contribute to overcome the crisis of political parties’ representativeness and of participatory democracy.
- Political parties could be strong conveners of multistakeholder dialogue processes.
- Dialogue contributes to the full development of civil society, which favors political parties.
- Political parties restructuring is required in terms of honoring promises, maintaining coherence between decisions and agreements, increasing internal democracy, overcoming caciquism and promoting inclusion.
- Dialogue may help political parties to recognize themselves as agents of development permanently linked with citizen groups.
- Dialogues may be designed to contribute to technical and political levels, therefore contributing to political parties.
- Social control from the society is vital, and multistakeholder dialogues may serve as a channel for this purpose.
- The participation of political parties in dialogue processes may strengthen communication within the political system.
- The usefulness of dialogue for advancing trust building at different levels of the political system, institutional level included, has been proven.
Conditions for developing an effective dialogue

- Clear objectives and results.
- Actors’ representativeness and genuine interest in the process, its themes and results.
- Comprehensive design of the strategic route and architecture of the process.
- Clear and ethical rules of the game and fulfilment of commitments.
- Generation of win-win results for actors.
- Real incentive for the strongest or most powerful.
- Adequate reading of context, interests, prospective and correlation of forces.
- Ensure access and transparency in the use of information by recognising that it is a source of power.
- Recognition that participation with a voice in a multistakeholder dialogue process contributes to the balance of forces.
- Development of internal institutional dialogues prior to multisectoral dialogues
- Recognition of existing differences among State, Nation and Government.
- Differentiation among high-level and grassroots dialogues.
- Development of efforts to even out the forces that will participate in the dialogue through preliminary sectoral meetings, building alliances and strengthening networks and institutional or social tissues, as the case may be.
- Definition of the role of cooperating agencies to reduce the imbalance of forces and encourage the willingness to dialogue.
- Definition of a strategy to be used with the media involved in the process for adequate and timely information.
- Prior assessment of the coincidence of interests versus costs and benefits of the dialogue.

Objects and fields of dialogue in public management

- Any public interest could be an object of dialogue.
- Limits of direct democracy and crossing point with representative democracy.
- Risk of turning dialogues into bilateral relationships.
- Do not confuse dialogue with other approaches, such as consultation.
- Access to information is a source of power in decision-making.
- Political parties’ crisis of representativeness.
- Clarify criteria on the effectiveness of dialogue and the timeframe entailed in the process.
- Solve the participation-representation contradiction.
- Dialogue should strengthen representation as part of institutionalisation processes.
- Develop efforts to change the prevailing conjugation of verb “participate”, i.e.: . . . I participate, you participate, we participate, they decide.
VI. Final conference

Mr. Roel von Meijenfeldt shared with the participants his main impressions and the lessons learned in the Journey. He commented his vision of dialogue as the instrument to advance cultural democracy; the key instrument we need in order to have a participatory democracy with quality and legitimacy in decision-making.

He made reference to the progress achieved at the level of social and political interaction in Guatemala, compared to the situation prevailing 10 years ago, and expressed that dialogue has been assumed in this country to strengthen the nation and find solutions for the most pressing issues afflicting society. The Shared National Agenda has become an important framework for policymaking in Guatemala, but he observes a gap at the level of commitment and interaction among political parties. This may constitute a strategic area to which we can contribute, seeking to strengthen the link between dialogue and the agreements of political parties in order for them to be more instrumental in public policymaking and implementation. Roel von Meijenfeldt asked facilitators and other actors involved in dialogue and public policymaking processes to build more instrumental relationships, recognizing the different responsibilities of Congress and political parties.

"As a community of practice, we must continue to encourage spaces where practitioners can meet outside the political arena, and inject new ideas, new energies and hopefully new practices to improve the environment for decision-making in the countries. In the end, that is what counts. Our interest is to make democracy deliver for the population and function better. We must work to have dialogues contribute to this challenge and to the creation of trust among the population in that democracy is, in fact, the government system that fulfils the population’s aspirations adequately".

He went on to say that in this journey, it became evident that the concept of political party is not yet quite clear. There is awareness of the importance of political parties but their functions in today’s world are not fully defined. Political parties should continue to dialogue, focusing on what political parties really are in the complex political arena. Political parties have lost control of advocating the demands of society. Multiple new actors have emerged, like the media, civil society organizations and new communication technologies. All these actors have become highly powerful instruments, and political parties find it hard to compete with these new policymaking and advocacy forms. The contributions of all actors are valuable and political parties need to find their roles in said context.

The Executive Director of the nIMD stressed the importance of events of this type, as it is highly encouraging to share experiences and best practices and keep each other abreast of what functions and what does not. This exchange may be expanded to experiences with dialogues, specifically in countries with less advanced dialogue culture and where the “the winner takes it all” syndrome still prevails in terms of political direction. Failure to overcome this syndrome will make it highly difficult for dialogue to be functional, and this is a challenge that we must address.

“"In this globalized and fragmented world is exactly where dialogue may contribute to unite societies, increment cohesion and renew social contracts”.

“It is important to continue considering the issue of the process, step by step, and the direction we have taken. When dialogue stops and the fire line starts . . that is where the major challenge for our cooperation is".