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Is Collaboration the Answer?

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Abstract

In the United States there has been a growing interest in using collaborative approach to environmental policy making and implementation. Collaboration is widely viewed as an alternative to the command-and-control approach and the confrontation that often accompanies it. The promise of reduced transition costs, more optimal technical solutions, and lower compliance costs makes this proposition quite attractive.

But collaborative approach is quite risky in the U.S context, partly because of the prevalent political culture and partly because it requires a considerable level of trust among the parties motivated by differing agendas. Additionally, we have a rather limited understanding of how to define success in a collaborative approach and what conditions must be satisfied to generate success. As a result, not only is unclear how to select for problems most suitable for collaborative approach and how to structure the process, but it is difficult to know what elements of successful collaborative experiences can serve as models for other countries and cultures. Better understanding of these issues would make a considerable contribution to environmental policy making and implementation in the global economy.

During recent years considerable case study data has accumulated on collaborations among industry, government, environmental groups and other key parties. Notable examples include Weber's book *Pluralism by the Rules* and the *Global Environmental Assessment* study conducted by a team at Harvard Kennedy School. Certain key elements of successful collaborations have been proposed on the basis of these studies.

In this session we propose to examine the empirical data as well as conceptual framework emerging from these and other studies. Our objective is to generate a dialogue and to consolidate a community of knowledge centered on the potential role of collaborative approaches as either complements or alternatives to command-and control regulatory systems, and as potential models for international transfer of policy approaches.