Multi-stakeholder platforms in the Agro-food sector: Putting the boundaries of the concept of MSPs

What are MSPs used for in the Agro-food context?

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“Multi-stakeholder platforms in the Agro-food sector: Putting the boundaries of the concept of MSPs”

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Preface

This report contains a study about a theoretical framework on Multi-stakeholder platforms, which I have written in order to finish my Bachelor graduation of the Bachelor Study Business and Consumer Sciences at Wageningen University.

During my Bachelor studies at Wageningen University and Helsinki University, I became more and more interested in the agro-food sector. The world is facing tremendous problems in the ''fight'' against hunger and the protection of natural resources. I am truly convinced that smart solutions and innovations can solve many of those problems and can make the world a little bit better. Those innovations should, however, be organized professionally and understandable. The main topic of this report, Multi-stakeholder platforms, can be a very helpful tool to do so.

First of all, I would like to thank Carlos Barzola Iza for his time, guidance and feedback during this research. I also would like to thank Domenico Dentoni for his useful feedback. Both of them have contributed to the development of this thesis report. Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their patience during my writing period.

Lise Elisabeth Helena van den Bosch

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Contents

''Changes are synonym for possibilities''

Abstract

The Agro-food sector has undergone some significant changes over the past few years and because of this, wicked problems (issues that are highly common in the Agro-food sector) can only be addressed using engaged multiple stakeholders in a MSP. MSPs often aim to address or have an impact on innovation and the sustainability of a MSP is based on tangible results and outcomes based on the objectives which are set by various actors. There has been a lot of research about those platforms, but none has tried to investigate the linkage between the governance mechanisms and the impact of Multi-stakeholder engagement and no clear attempt has been made to clarify them. Therefore, this research has tried to explain how different governance mechanisms such as resources, actors and the informal/formal sharing process can determine the classification of Multi-stakeholder platforms, and it has especially elaborated on a clear definition of MSPs. A theoretical framework that integrates New Institutional Economics, literature on agricultural innovation and MSPs and a Systematic Literature Review have been used for this research consequently. This has resulted in six typologies which have shown that they aim for institutional/political, technological, commercial, organizational innovation, or even a combination of them. However, it has appeared that it is difficult to distinguish the typologies from each other (besides typology 2 and 6) as they show a lot of similarities. Therefore, it is recommended that any further research should continue on making linkages in the area of Multi-stakeholder platforms and thus also on making improvements to the conclusions where Multi-stakeholder platforms are used for in the Agro-food sector.

Keywords: Multi-stakeholder platform, innovation, governance mechanisms, resources, actors, process.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

While we are living on a beautiful planet, the population is rapidly increasing. According to many scientist and common sense, this increasing population will pressurize natural resources and cause management problems accordingly. In order to cope with these problems, innovations are extremely necessary. Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP) seem to be a very useful tool in guiding these processes. However, the term ‘’MSP’’ need to be made more concrete. Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP) vary from a mere consultative process to a more transformative one. The main elements of MSPs are various stakeholders which come together to contribute their own resources, inputs, and knowledge to achieve a common objective and they can be classified upon different governance mechanisms (Badibanga et al., 2013). Originally MSPs were initiated for natural resource management, in which the stakeholders share a common-pool resource, as for example access to water in a river basin, where the platform contributes to the collective management of that particular resource (Leeuwis, 2002). Nowadays, terms such as multi-stakeholder and engagement have become “buzzwords” in the sustainability business and policy area (Dentoni et al., 2012).

According to Dentoni and Peterson (2011) 23 of the 50 largest global food and beverage companies have created or joined various types or partnerships with heterogeneous stakeholders to address sustainability of the Agro-food supply chain and its products over the last ten years accordingly. An explanation for this is that the Agro-food sector has undergone some significant changes due to a permanent evolution which will continue in the next decennium, whereby it is important to keep supporting this sector in ways of agricultural research to preserve its competitive power by 2020 (Vuylsteke and Gijseghem, 2009). Furthermore, in developing countries, as an example in the area of sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of the smallholder farmers are still confronted with diverse challenges and in order to combat them, several interventions are required - such as the integrated approach of MSP - that are responsive to their needs (Martey et al., 2014). MSPs are therefore important for the agribusiness as they can contribute to this sector, whereby they facilitate the achievement of solutions to issues that go beyond the setting of formal institutions (Badibanga et al., 2013).

Issues as Agro-food sustainability, biodiversity loss can be referred to as ‘wicked problems’ and are issues which are highly common in the Agro-food sector. Those wicked problems are highly complex, change over time, have infinite and undefined causes, are in addition difficult to understand and to frame and above all determine value conflict among stakeholders. Besides this, wicked problems do not have a straightforward answer and instead of being solved, they have to be managed accordingly (Dentoni et al., 2012). Agribusiness managers have realised nowadays that those wicked problems require almost only organizational change. This implies that the firms have to involve in multi-stakeholder engagement (MSE), whereby Freeman’s stakeholder theory indicates that strategies which provide benefits, or diminish harm, covering most stakeholders are most effective for the long-term growth and

continuity of the firms (Freeman, 2010). While learning theories indicate that firms need to be efficient in getting the knowledge in various ways from stakeholders (Teece, 2007) when engaging in MSE (Ferrell et al., 2010). This engagement also leads to a managed exchange by diverse stakeholders in other ways than resulting from an open market (Peterson, 2013). Consequently, 'wicked problems' can only be addressed using engaged multiple stakeholders (Rittel and Weber, 1973). Thus, when dealing with wicked problems, new forms of 'innovative governance arrangements' are initiated, such as round the table meetings (Schouten and Glasbergen, 2011), leadership networks (Nooteboom and Termeer, 2013), public-private partnerships (Diamond and Liddle, 2005), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), multilevel forums (Bates et al., 2013) and multi-stakeholder dialogues (Warner, 2006 ; Dentoni et al., 2012). Consequently to all this, MSPs often aim to address or have an impact on innovation and the sustainability of a MSP is based on tangible results and outcomes based on the objectives which are set by the various actors.

Even though there are a lot of studies on Multi-stakeholder platforms and there is a lot of knowledge about MSPs consequently. Nevertheless, no research had made linkages between the governance mechanisms and the impact of multi-stakeholder engagement and there has no clear attempt been made to clarify them in the Agro-food sector. This will still lead agribusiness managers without any clear recommendations for participation in multi-stakeholder engagement (Dentoni and Ross, 2013). Moreover, companies are willing to get involved in MSP and it is also part of their interest to achieve impacts in MSPs. Besides this all, a lot of definitions are used – as virtual or physical institutions of common use for example- to describe this partnership of stakeholders and it is therefore important to distinguish those different governance types and to come up with a classification of Multi-stakeholder platforms in this research, because no attempt has been made to do this until now.

1.2 Research purpose

This research aims to develop a theoretical framework which will explain how different governance mechanisms such as resources, actors and the informal/formal sharing process can determine the classification of Multi-stakeholder platforms, and it will especially elaborate on a clear definition of MSPs. Hereby there has been made use of a theoretical framework that integrates New Institutional Economics, literature on agricultural innovation and MSPs. The research departs from a sample of literature on MSPs impact on innovation. These findings will lead to conclusions on where Multi-stakeholder platforms are used for in the Agro-food context.

The conclusions that this research will deliver will be of practical use for organisations that want to engage in Multi-stakeholder platforms. It also aims to advance the knowledge of MSPs in the Agro-food sector and agribusiness, whereby it proposes a classification of MSPs which is based on the different governance mechanisms that are involved. Organisations can detect where their MSP consist of and can make use of those elements accordingly. If the elements of MSP are not those needed to successfully enter Multi-stakeholder platforms, the findings of this research can be used to make suggestions on the redesign of the elements of MSPs.

1.3 Proposed research topic

The following general research question should be answered through the literature study in this research:

"What are the main typologies, roles and governance mechanisms of MSPs in the Agro-food sector?"

This research topic has resulted in the following sub research questions:

o *What are MSPs and how can they be classified?*

- Type of resources
- Type of actors
- Process of sharing (e.g. formal and informal)

o *What are MSPs for?*

- Type of innovation (e.g. technological, organizational, institutional/political, commercial etc.),

o *What is the linkage between the governance of MSPs and what they are for?*

After the independent literature study a random sample of 16 articles was selected through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on MSPs impact on innovation. This Systematic Literature Review is meant to further explore the literature of MSPs in the Agro-food context and thus to set boundaries for the definition of Multi-stakeholder platforms. Based on this research paper, recommendations can be given for further research on this topic.

2. Methodology

Existing literature on governance mechanisms, agricultural innovations and Multi-stakeholder platforms and the connection between these three concepts will form the basis of this research in order to give the theoretical framework of MSPs. The main research question requires that the governance mechanisms (e.g. resources, actors and process of sharing) are analysed and that the relationship between those mechanisms should be linked to agricultural innovations. There are a lot of studies on MSPs, whereby the relationship between MSPs and governance mechanisms or agricultural innovations is widely described. However, no research has made linkages between the governance mechanisms and the impact of Multi Stakeholder Engagement (MSE). In order to find literature on MSPs, governance mechanisms and agricultural innovations, general key words have been used: multi-stakeholder cooperation/alliance/initiative/partnership, innovation, agriculture, governance mechanism, agribusiness and Agro-food. However, it was not possible to use the keywords on multi-stakeholder collaboration/alliance/initiative/partnership, governance mechanism and impact, because this linkage has not been described yet. This research will place the findings of the linkage between the impact of agricultural innovations with governance mechanisms in the context of multi-stakeholder partnerships in the Agro-food sector. In the end, recommendations can be made about which governance mechanism are linked to a specific agricultural innovation when entering a multi-stakeholder partnership in the Agro-food sector.

Next to Chapter 3 in which the key elements of MSPs are discussed, a random sample of 16 articles was selected through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on MSPs impact on innovation, which was carried out by Barzola Iza and Dentoni (2016) in Chapter 4 ''Literature review''. A random sample implies that every paper had an equal chance of being selected out of the available papers. This sample corresponds to a search query in two databases: *Scopus* and *Web of Science*. This sample led to a deepened theoretical application of the findings in the literature study and therefore helps to recognize "typologies" (or "clusters" of MSPs). A typology of MSPs is a set of samples which look quite similar to each other based on their similar elements: governance mechanisms and type of innovations. One top-down code "What are they used for?" is being used in order to categorize the sample. Top-down coding implies deductive reasoning, which means that a general code has been generated which will lead to more specific reasoning based on the sample. Furthermore, bottom-up codes have been developed according to the literature study. Bottom-up coding implies inductive reasoning which means that specific codes have been generated based on the section "Key elements of MSPs" and this will lead to more general reasoning (Trochim, 2006). However, codes have also been developed that are not based on the section "Key elements of MSPs", which will provide additional information next to the findings of the literature study and also to the main research question subsequently.

3. Key elements of MSPs

Multi-stakeholder platforms are meant as platforms and they can be distinguished from multi-stakeholder networks/dialogues/processes or coalitions based on the fact that MSPs are hybrids. MSPs are referred to as hybrid forms of transaction coordination, because they consist of some formal elements which are combined with informal elements (e.g. key aspect of hybrid forms) which then distinguishes a MSP from a network of stakeholders. Multi-stakeholder platforms have been extensively defined in recent literature and according to this come in various forms and sizes, including both formal as well as informal (Russo and Tencati 2009). A Multi-stakeholder platform is related to the concept of learning alliances, which are known for boosting multi-stakeholder learning processes in order to stimulate innovation and business development. Although it differs from that concept as it consists of a bounded membership of various different actors which is linked to shared resources (Thiele et al., 2011). Multi-stakeholders and stakeholders only differ in a way that various actors come together in a platform to innovate together when it concerns multi-stakeholders, while stakeholders comprise a specific group of actors. Furthermore, those hybrid forms of transaction coordination are described in the sections about governance (paragraph 3.1; 3.3; 3.4), which is essential for creating the definition of MSPs. This section will further explain MSPs and in chapter 4 the typologies of MSPs will be widely discussed. This will enable the possibility to distinguish different types of governance according to Ménard (2004). The theoretical framework on MSPs will be build on resource interdependency, actors, formal and informal mechanisms accordingly. Kooiman (1993) defined governing as “all those interactions and activities of social, political and administrative actors that can be seen of as purposeful efforts to guide, steer, control or manage (sectors or facets of) societies” and governance has been defined as “the patterns that emerge from governing activities”.

MSPs are seen as hybrid forms of transaction coordination, which indicates that MSPs are standing in between markets and hierarchies and are some form of relation-only alliances (Ménard, 2004; Peterson et al., 2002). Williamson (1975) has provided a detailed perspective on the nature of governance structures that exist between organizations under various external conditions. He states that market versus hierarchical governance structures are based on the level of opportunism which is presented in relationships. It is a question of opportunism, when various actors in an exchange relationship are guided by considerations of self-interest with guile (e.g. behaviours such as cheating, lying and subtle forms of violation of the agreements) (Grover and Malhotra, 2003). Moreover, markets and hierarchies (e.g. firms) are considered as alternative instruments for completing a set of transactions. Whereas the decision of which instrument to choose (e.g. the governance mechanism) is dependent on the relational efficiency of each (Williamson, 1975). Consequently to all this, markets and hierarchies represent governance mechanisms in their purest way. The various intermediate forms which are conceptualized, as MSPs, can be represented by the degree of vertical integration and to which extent there is cooperative behaviour in the relationship present (Grover and Malhotra, 2003). Although, each one has various mechanisms which are involved

with the coordination of the flow of materials and services through all the steps in the value chain (Malone et al., 1987). They all control and direct this specific flow at a higher level in the management hierarchy (Grover and Malhotra., 2003).

3.1 Actors of MSPs

A Multi-stakeholder platform consists of different actors who all have different roles and expectations. This paragraph will therefore describe the actors that are deeply involved in MSPs to expand the theoretical framework on MSPs.

The actors within a MSP are stakeholders which can be defined as groups and individuals that are influential and/or are affected by an organization consequently (Freeman 2010). Furthermore, stakeholders are frequently categorized in types as employees, stockholders, supply chain partners, competitors, governments, communities and consumers (Donaldson and Preston 1995) and also by their salience (Mitchell et al. 1997). The actions of those actors can be described as processes "in which actors from civil society, business and governmental institutions come together in order to find a common approach to an issue that affects them all" (Roloff 2008) whereby diversity among the actors will maximize the chances to create and implement a system innovation (Peterson, 2013). A MSP will enhance the interaction between the different actors in the end (Nederlof et al. 2011; Hall et al. 2001). As 'wicked problems' can be only addressed using engaged multiple stakeholders. This requires organizations to engage in a so-called strategic dialogue and to take action with various actors which are in- and outside the supply chain at levels that are unusual in the Agricultural food sector. Examples of these MSEs are NGOs, policy makers, universities and civil society organizations (Dentoni et al., 2012).

Consequently to all this, there are many non-business actors present in a MSP which implies that there are various and often conflicting interests among the organizations. Also their perceptions and values of events and facts vary in a conflicting way. This will ensure actors to push their own interests and to hold back other's decisions, related to a wicked problem. However, all those interests are basically economic based and largely driven by profit. As for example, governments, knowledge institutions and societal advocacy groups are actually not that single minded, but each of them has their own incentives and motivations. Furthermore, engaging in a MSP is necessary for managing wicked problems as various value-conflicted actors have to co-create new knowledge and thus have to work together in order to empower system innovation (Peterson, 2013).

A MSP creates value for the actors, because they are or may become interdependent. On the one hand this can lead to tension, conflict, manoeuvring whereby they look for an advantage and it also leads to group displacement. On the other hand, it can lead to opportunities such as building confidence, social learning, joint action and mutual understanding (Leeuwis, 2002). It is therefore important to build commitment among the actors of the chain, as "commitment spells the difference between success and failure as groups or individuals who are highly committed to a given cause contribute a lot to the realization of that cause" (Manalili, 2009). What follows is that the various actors within a chain should have a certain understanding of the fact that they are not competitors. Instead, it is in everyone's interest to work together to improve the product quality so they can deliver what the market is demanding (Manalili,

2009). Furthermore, the actors could not have achieved those opportunities on their own and one actor in the MSP can provide the missing resource which will contribute to an effective MSE (Pieters et al., 2012). The collaboration within a MSP can be seen as one of the more advantageous moments of learning, as collaboration implies synergy and a joint effort to the fulfilment of a particular objective (Vairo et al., 2009). However, a MSP can have an extensive initial phase of mutual learning and role definition, which involves all the actors, before it can get started. Reasons for this are the complicated membership and the potential for a conflict (Thiele et al., 2005). Furthermore, the roles of all the actors can change, not only as a result of a change in the MSPs objectives or strategies, but also as a result of internal reflection and learning (Nederlof et al 2011).

All in all, a MSP is a holistic approach which means that various actors are involved and it makes use of linkages in order to achieve an improved action, behavioural changes and coordination. A Multi-stakeholder platform could be used to let those actors respond to changing and complicated institutional and environmental changes, whereby they exchange their knowledge with each other and generate innovation consequently (Hall et al., 2001).

3.2 Innovation

Multi-stakeholder platforms can establish different kind of innovations, whereby they cover a great spectrum of structures and levels of engagement (e.g. some of them are classified as farmers' innovations). This paragraph will therefore describe and classify the different types of innovation to further expand the theoretical framework on MSPs.

First of all, innovation implies "the use of new ideas, new technologies or new ways of doing things in place or by people where they have not been used before." (Barnett, 2004). A MSP can establish technological, institutional/political, commercial and organizational innovations. Technological innovations comprise new products, production practices or packaging, whereas institutional innovations comprise changes in the rules and norms of diverse organizational constructions and transactional relationships in order to produce a desired outcome (Devaux et al., 2009; Morales, 2006). Moreover, commercial innovations aim to link farmers to new value chains and organizational innovations aim to develop new organizations which help farmers in order to transact more efficiently with each other.

Furthermore, dialogues on policy, consensus-building, implementation of practical solutions and decision making are examples of the scope that a MSP comprises. However, the exact nature of any of such a process will depend on the issues, its participants, the scope, the timelines and its objectives. Besides this, a MSP can achieve three different and connected functions in any value chain. Firstly, it can generate a place where various actors can learn and innovate jointly, they will act then as an innovation intermediary or broker. Klerkx and Leeuwis (2009) have described three key innovation brokerage functions: (a) demand articulation, this articulates innovation needs and matching demands, (b) network formation, this facilitates linkages between actors (e.g. scanning, scoping, filtering and matchmaking of potential cooperation partners) and (c) innovation process management. Secondly, a MSP can also generate a governance function within a value chain in order to improve the coordination of the various business activities by the actors and diminish the transaction costs accordingly (Martey et al., 2014). Access barriers to market participation are the embodiment of transaction costs which make it hard to participate, whereby the cost of getting information is a key transaction cost (Shepherd, 1997). This second function can be provided by market mechanisms, hierarchical non-market mechanisms and by non-market based voluntary coordination between the various actors (Markelova et al., 2009). Lastly, it can generate advocacy functions in order to protect against policy change or influence (Martey et al., 2014).

Hospes (2008) states that it is a challenging, if not impossible task to unravel the cause-effect relationships of MSE on value creation for society from other factors. However, effective MSE can lead to value creation for an organization as new capabilities and resources can be build. They can be categorized into transferred (e.g. subsidies and market intelligence), synergistic (e.g. learning and innovation), interactive (e.g. improved relationships and access to networks) and associational capabilities and resources (e.g. credibility or legitimacy) (Austin and Seitanidi, 2012). Peterson (2013) states that MSPs lead to positive outcomes for both the

society as for the MSE process, when the actors within a MSP are diverse and also strongly engaged from the beginning. Furthermore, if a Multi-stakeholder platform manages and anticipates on a conflict, it will be able to diminish possible conflicts in the future that can lead to higher transaction costs among the actors (Williamson, 1979). Finally, when various resources are controlled by a MSP, this will be considered as a predictor for purposes of innovation (Ménard, 2004).

Multi-stakeholder engagement also leads to both system outcomes as process outcomes in the case of wicked problems (Peterson, 2013). The former comprises system components as people, planet and profit, that will be changed into preferable ways. They are seen as the 'real' things that actors want to change in the system. The latter implies that governance mechanisms will be improved for future MSE, whereby the actors will move to co-creation, action and learning. So, MSE lead to connected values and new knowledge in the end.

An example of a MSP in the Agro-food context is a research which has contributed to the development of organic food and farming policy in Europe by "assessing existing agricultural policies and their impact on the organic food and farming sector together with the most important stakeholders of the organic farming sector in the European Union" (Vairo et al., 2009). An elaborative debate among stakeholders has also contributed to a growing understanding of policy practices and their impact by collaborative working and the creation of networks, whereby those Multi-Stakeholder processes unite all important stakeholders to participate in a new form of communication and decision finding on a particular matter (Hemmati, 2002). Collaborative working or the creation of networks is based on democratic principles of transparency and participation (Martey et al., 2014). Furthermore, collaborative working or learning promotes the development of critical thinking, whereby the ability of problem solving and the development of cognitive skills will be enlarged (De Kerckhove, 2004). Whereas it is also based on the acceptance of the importance of achieving equity and accountability between the stakeholders, involving an equitable representation of at least three stakeholder groups and their views (Martey et al., 2014). Finally, MSPs could be helpful to enable organization and action of multi-institutional and multidisciplinary actors and makes it possible that those actors will respond to changing, complex institutional and environmental challenges (Hall et al., 2001). This will lead to exchange of knowledge and thus to generating innovation together (Amede and Sangina, 2014).

3.3 Resources of MSPs

The pooling of resources can be referred to as the process of the grouping of resources for the purpose of the decision making process (Ménard, 2004). These resources can be understood as, for example, knowledge or human and organizational resources; which will be further explained in this paragraph to get a better understanding of the theoretical framework of MSPs.

Organizations need to develop suitable tangible and intangible resources in order to engage with various stakeholders in MSPs. Examples of tangible resources are land, vehicles, equipment, machinery, furniture, inventory, stock, bonds and cash. Examples of intangible resources are, on the other hand, patents, trademarks, franchises, goodwill and copyrights (Investopedia, 2016). Contrary to this, it is important to mention that the literature does not provide any applicable recommendations to managers so far about which resources within an organization are necessary to engage in MSPs. However, Teece (2007) recommends that organizations need to be efficient in scanning, choosing, acquiring and integrating knowledge from stakeholders. First of all, knowledge is a type of intangible resource that stakeholders need to share in MSPs in order to improve both system and process outcomes (those outcomes are defined in section 3.2 'innovation'). It is important to distinguish between new and existing knowledge, as existing knowledge is insufficient in two ways. Such knowledge is suspect to the other stakeholders, whereby lack of trust, fear of strategic behaviour and differences in values and perceptions are indicators which lead to this suspicion. Moreover, existing knowledge is insufficient since this knowledge happened to bring the stakeholders in conflict from the beginning. Likewise, it cannot or resolve the differences in opinions between stakeholders. This is where new knowledge comes into place and its co-creation by MSE will lead to system innovation. Furthermore, stakeholders will break the old paradigms and processes and will create new ones (Peterson, 2013).

Dynamic capabilities (e.g. intangible resources) such as the integration of stakeholders, continuous innovation, learning and stakeholder orientation (Ferrell et al. 2010; Maignan et al. 2011; Sharma and Vredenburg, 1998) are key factors which determine an organization's level of pro-activeness and reactiveness when stakeholders are engaging with each other. Also when multi-stakeholder engagements are established, organizational experience will only result in new capabilities if some of the involved stakeholders will make the experiential learning goal-oriented (Pesqueira and Verburg, 2012; van Latesteijn and Rabbinge, 2012). Besides this, the development of new organizational capabilities will only occur if managers are allowed to initiate, lead or join MSEs (Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo-Metcalfe 2010; Dentoni et al. 2012a).

All in all, when actors decide to engage in MSPs they choose to allocate scarce resources (e.g. capital and time). In order to manage those resources, they have to involve with a large number of stakeholders, whereby they make decisions and take actions together (Dentoni and Ross, 2013).

3.4 Process of sharing on MSPs

Multi-stakeholder platforms come in various forms and sizes, including both formal as well as informal (Russo and Tencati 2009). As being said before, MSPs can be seen as a continuum of hybrid forms. Some of them are very formal versus others that are mostly informal (although, still with some formal elements, which makes them hybrid forms and distinguishes them from hybrids). This paragraph will therefore describe the informal and formal mechanisms that are involved with the process of sharing to further expand the theoretical framework on MSPs.

Multi-stakeholder alliances, platforms, partnerships and initiatives are examples of formal MSPs and interactions, networks and relationships are again examples of informal MSPs (Russo and Tencati, 2009). According to Dentoni et al. (2012), formal and informal are components of engagement connected within and across various multi-stakeholder processes. Moreover, the before mentioned governance mechanisms maximize learning and value creation for the engaged actors and the society, but also reduce the transactions costs of engagement and temper the wicked problem consequently. Those costs are incurred by market agents when they are searching for a seller or buyer; negotiating aspects of trade and controlling and enforcing contracts. Furthermore, transaction costs are the consequence of the uncertainty which arises from opportunistic behaviour of the market agents, asymmetric or limited information, investments in assets which are specific to a transaction and the concentration of market agents (Williamson, 1991).

Due to the hybrid forms of transaction coordination relations between interdependent actors can be alleviated trough formal (e.g. written contracts) and informal mechanisms (e.g. trust) (Bradach and Eccles, 1989). “Trust is a type of expectation that alleviates the fear that one's exchange partner will act opportunistically. Of course, the risk of opportunism must be present for trust to operate” (Gambetta, 2000). Zucker (1986) defined three different ways in which trust is generated. Characteristic- based trust implies social resemblance, process-based trust is generated through repeated transactions and institution-based trust is connected to formal social structures. Repeated transactions, norms of obligation (e.g. imply the presence of shared values) and personal relationships are mechanisms which are the basis for interdependency and trust between actors which will boost trust in the end. Furthermore, trust can influence exchanges over time or at a given time as trust will change from one context (personal friendships for example) to the other context (economic for example) (Bradach and Eccles, 1989).

While according to Grandori and Soda (1995) trust is more an outcome (e.g. a characteristic of an emerging relationship) than a mechanism. They also state that the actors can be sure that the other actors will act in the interest of a system of cooperation to which they belong (e.g. a MSP for example), because their interests will overlap. According to Ménard (2004) hybrid forms of transaction coordination rely mainly on trust as the decisions are within this form decentralized and a loose coordination is applied by having mutual influence and reciprocity. Trust improves the ability to create cohesion and ensures certain coordination as

it finds its origin in the need to support continuity in the relationship between the various actors within a MSP. As it has been said, a MSP can be formalized into contractual agreements; an associational contract regulates cooperation among a large number of equivalent organizations and an exchange contract regulate transactional interdependence (Grandori and Soda, 1995). A contract can deliver ways of arranging relationships among the actors within a MSP, whereby it creates transactional reciprocity (Ménard, 2004). Moreover, contracts create advantages such as for example from the transfer of competencies and from sharing scare resources with each other (e.g. finance). However, disadvantages are also present such as the fact that contracts are incomplete and are subject to unexpected readjustments. This is so, because most contracts contain information about transactions that involve particular assets and uncertainties play a significant role. However, contracts enable the coordination of actors within a MSP, which has been seen as an important characteristic. Besides this, contracts provide in most cases a relatively simple and uniform framework, whereby it is thus important to keep in mind that they are not constantly getting improved as this would be too costly. Finally, most contracts are not tailored to the specific characteristics or the situation of the actors involved (e.g. standardization) (Ménard, 2004).

Consequently to all this, a mechanism tends to be more formal in order to monitor the contract, when the uncertainty is higher on the output and/or on the process (Ménard, 1996; Ghose and John, 1999; Oxley, 1997; Sauvée, 2002).

Finally, communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms have to take place in order to maintain long-term cooperation as some inter-firm relationships continue to only exist by sharing those mechanisms together and therefore form a process of sharing.

4. Literature review

According to the Chapter 3 "Key elements of MSPs" the resources have been mainly subdivided into tangible and intangible resources: land, vehicles, equipment, machinery, furniture, inventory, stock, bond and cash for the tangible resources and patents, trademarks, franchises, goodwill, copyrights, knowledge and capabilities for the intangible resources. Employees, stockholders, supply chain partners, competitors, government, communities, consumers, NGOs, policymakers, universities, civil society organizations, non- business and business actors are the bottom-up codes for actors. The process of sharing has been subdivided into formal and informal forms of MSPs: multi-stakeholder alliances, platforms, partnerships and initiatives are formal forms of MSPs and interactions, networks and relationships are informal forms of MSPs. Moreover, contracts (e.g. associational and exchange), trust, communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms are also bottom-up codes for the process of sharing on MSPs. Finally, the literature on innovation has given four bottom-up codes: technological, institutional/political, commercial and organizational innovations. However, codes also have been developed that are not based on Chapter 3 regarding resources and the process of sharing: information on new technologies, crops, support-generating capacity (e.g. SGC), complementarities, risks, benefits, multi-stakeholder partnership policy, agreement or contract, community bylaws, informal and formal rules, informal and formal documents, standards and certification. Moreover, six typologies have been developed based on this literature review and will be explained later on.

#	Article name
1	A systems and partnership approach to agricultural research for development: Lessons from Ethiopia (Abate et al., 2011).
2	Partnering to Facilitate Smallholder Inclusion in Value Chains (Helmsing et al., 2009).
3	Enhancing food security through a multi-stakeholder process: the global agenda for sustainable livestock (Breeman et al., 2015).
4	A conceptual framework to evaluate the impact of innovation platforms on agrifood value chains development (Cadilhon, 2013).
5	Assessing the effectiveness of multistakeholder platforms: agricultural and rural management councils in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Badibanga et al., 2013).
6	Promoting effective multi-stakeholder partnership for policy development for smallholder farming systems: A case of the Sub Saharan Africa challenge programme (Kefasi et al., 2011).
7	Collective action for market chain innovation in the Andes (Devaux et al., 2009).
8	Innovation platforms for sustainable land management in East African landscapes: Stewardship, incentives, and challenges (Amede and Sanginga, 2014).
9	Do decentralized innovation systems promote agricultural technology adoption ? Experimental evidence from Africa (Pamuk et al., 2014).
10	Agricultural innovation platforms in West Africa: How does strategic institutional entrepreneurship unfold in different value chain contexts? (van Paassen et al., 2014).
11	Multi-stakeholder platforms for linking small farmers to value chains: evidence from the Andes (Thiele et al., 2011).
12	Using innovation platforms to scale out soil acidity-ameliorating technologies in Dedza district in central Malawi (Kabambe et al., 2012).
13	The role of social learning for soil conservation: The case of Amba Zuria land management, Ethiopia (Dessie et al., 2012).
14	Impact of innovation platforms on marketing relationships: the case of Volta Basin integrated crop-livestock value chains in Ghana (Adane Mariami et al., 2013).
15	Public–private partnerships and developing-country agriculture: Evidence from the international agricultural research system (Spielman et al., 2010).
16	Exploring the potential of intersectoral partnerships to improve the position of farmers in global agrifood chains: Findings from the coffee sector in Peru (Bitzer et al., 2013).

Table 1: *"Articles from the SRL."*

#	Resources
1	Intangible resources (knowledge, information on new technologies and capabilities) and tangible resources (land and crops).
2	Intangible resources (knowledge, information on new technologies, complementarities and capabilities).
3	Intangible resources (knowledge and capabilities).
4	Intangible resources (knowledge and capabilities).
5	Intangible resources (knowledge, support-generating capacity and capabilities).
6	Intangible resources (knowledge, information on new technologies and capabilities) and tangible resources (equipment and cash)
7	Intangible resources (knowledge and capabilities) and tangible resources (crops).
8	Intangible resources (knowledge, information on new technologies and capabilities) and tangible resources (cash, land and equipment).
9	Intangible resources (knowledge, information on new technologies and capabilities).
10	Intangible resources (knowledge and capabilities). Tangible resource (cash).
11	Intangible resources (knowledge, trademarks and capabilities) and tangible resources (cash and crops).
12	Intangible resources (knowledge and information on new technologies) and tangible resources (land, crops and equipment).
13	Intangible resources (knowledge, information on new technologies and capabilities) and tangible resources (land, equipment and crops).
14	Intangible resources (knowledge and capabilities).
15	Intangible resources (knowledge, information on new technologies, complementarities, risks and benefits) and tangible resource (cash and crops).
16	Intangible resources (knowledge and capabilities) and tangible resources (land).

Table 2: *"Resources that were shared in the MSPs."*

Article #5 states that the achievement of the MSP objectives is dependent on the capacity of its stakeholders to constantly provide support. This support can take different forms: financial contributions and grants, technical support and in-kind contributions such as labour, inputs, land, building, equipment, sponsorship of activities, information, documentation, training, and several others (e.g. support-generating capacity) (Badibanga et al., 2013). Furthermore, article #2 states that grow of partnerships has been associated with the complementarities among the actors, which leads to inclusion of smallholders by improving the distribution of labour along the value chain. This means that the efficiency of one actor will increase the returns to the other actors. Also information on new technologies is introduced as a new resource since MSPs address the absence of technology, information and knowledge in two ways. Governmental research and extension services are made more responsive to the changing market demands by developing arrangements that promote collaboration between farmers, public technology provides and buyers. It also stimulates buyers to work directly with farmers in order to pass on the knowledge and technology which is crucial for the participation in the value chain (Helmsing et al., 2009).

#	Actors
1	Researchers, smallholder farmers[1], NGOs, the private sector and local governments.
2	Businesses, NGOs, smallholder farmers and the government.
3	Public sector, private sector, researchers, civil society organizations, donors and NGOs.
4	Non-business and business actors.
5	The rural producers, civil society organizations, private sector, NGOs and the government.
6	Government, smallholder farmers, NGOs, unions, advocacy organizations, traders, agro-processors, agro-dealers, marketers, financial services and beneficiary communities.
7	Smallholder farmers (e.g. potato producers), government, NGOs, service providers, traders, processors, supermarkets, researchers, extension agents, chefs and policy makers.
8	Smallholder farmers, researchers, traders, NGOs, donors, local government, policy makers and communities.
9	Researchers, government, producers, intermediaries, customers, financial organizations, farmers' organizations, traders, extension workers, NGOs and policy makers.
10	Smallholder farmers, researchers, NGOs, public sector, private sector and policy makers.
11	Agricultural research organization, universities, NGOs, private sector, small, medium and large farmers, R&D organizations, government, traders, processors and supermarkets.
12	Smallholder Farmers, government, NGOs and researchers.
13	Farmers, experts, scientists and the government.
14	Smallholder farmers, input suppliers, traders, processors and IP facilitators.
15	Non-business and business actors.
16	Producer organizations, private sector, NGOs, experts, smallholder farmers and the government.

Table 3: *"Actors in the MSPs."*

There have been found many more actors in the sample than that there have been described in the literature study. All the most relevant ones have been coded and do not need any further explanation.

#	Process of sharing
1	Formal mechanism (associational contract) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
2	Formal mechanism (associational contract), informal mechanism (relationships) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
3	Formal mechanism (formal documents), informal mechanisms (relationships, networks, interactions and informal documents) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
4	Informal mechanisms (process-based trust, interactions, relationships and networks) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
5	Formal mechanisms (contracting advisory services, interface between farmer groups and governments agencies), informal mechanisms (relationships and networks) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
6	Formal mechanisms (a multi-stakeholder partnership policy, agreement or contract), informal mechanisms (process-based trust, relationships and interactions) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
7	Informal mechanisms (characteristic- based trust, relationships, networks and interactions) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
8	Formal mechanism (community bylaws), informal mechanisms (interactions and relationships) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
9	Informal mechanism (characteristic- based trust) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

[1] A smallholder farmer is defined as a marginal and sub-marginal farm household who owns or/and cultivates less than 2.0 hectare of land (Singh et al., 2002).

10	Formal mechanism (formal authority to formulate new rules and norms), informal mechanisms (characteristic- based trust, networks and relationships) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
11	Formal mechanism (formal rules), informal mechanisms (characteristic- based trust, informal rules, interactions and networks) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
12	Informal mechanism (interactions) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
13	Informal mechanisms (characteristic-based trust, relationships, interactions and networks) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
14	Informal mechanisms (interactions and relationships) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
15	Formal mechanism (formal documents), informal mechanisms (characteristic-based trust, informal documents, relationships, networks and interactions) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.
16	Formal mechanisms (standards and certification mechanisms), informal mechanism (relationships) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

Table 4: *"Process of sharing in the MSPs."*

Article #6 states that it is necessary that a multi-stakeholder partnership policy, agreement or contract consists of principles that underpin the partnership, the shared values and goals and also the roles, responsibilities and commitments to action. Moreover, article #8 states that the community bylaws that were used by the MSPs as enforcement mechanism. While article #11 states that the informal and formal rules were of quite diverse types, whereby some have something to do with who can be a member of the platform and what roles they may perform. Others relate to the types of benefit the actors receive. Furthermore, some of the rules were implicit, while others were explicit and written. Furthermore, article #15 states that the public-private partnerships include any type of formal or informal document between public-and private-sector actors, such as technology financing, knowledge-sharing networks, or subcontracted research. Finally, article #16 states that the investigated partnerships combined their activities with the use of standards and certification. This is done in order to promote a set of rules for sustainable production and also to respond to the global demand for high quality and sustainable products subsequently.

#	Innovations
1	Technological innovation (technology adoption, productivity growth and market orientation of production).
2	Commercial innovation (smallholder inclusion in value chains).
3	Institutional/political innovation (enhance food security).
4	Organizational innovation (governance function within a value chain).
5	Organizational innovation (governance function within a value chain).
6	Commercial, technological and institutional/political innovation.
7	Commercial, technological and institutional/political innovation.
8	Technological innovation (adoption and scaling up of SLM).
9	Technological innovation (agricultural intensification and development).
10	Commercial innovation (for the benefit of smallholder farmers).
11	Organizational, commercial, technological and institutional/political innovation.
12	Technological innovation (scale out soil acidity-ameliorating technologies).

13	Institutional/political innovation (changes in the rules and norms; social learning).
14	Commercial innovation (improve the market access for the smallholder farmers).
15	Institutional/political innovation (conduct research for development; poverty reduction).
16	Commercial innovation (improve the position of smallholder farmers and their organizations).

Table 5: *"Innovations in the MSPs."*

From the sample analysed, a first typology of MSPs aims to stimulate institutional innovation (articles #3, #13 and #15). These MSPs share the resources knowledge, capabilities and information on new technologies and crops among the non-business and business actors through relationships, interactions, networks, characteristic- based trust, informal and formal documents and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

A second typology of MSPs aims to stimulate technological innovation (articles #1, #8, #9 and #12). These MSPs share the resources knowledge, capabilities, information on new technologies, land, equipment and crops among smallholder farmers, researchers, NGOs, policymakers, the government and the private sector through interactions and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

A third typology aims to stimulate commercial innovation (articles #2, #10, #14 and #16). These MSPs share the resources knowledge and capabilities among smallholder farmers, NGOs, the government and the private sector through relationships and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

A fourth typology aims to stimulate organizational innovation (article #4 and #5). These MSPs shares the resources knowledge and capabilities among non-business and business actors through relationships, networks and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

A fifth typology aims to stimulate institutional, technological and commercial innovation (articles #6 and #7). These MSPs share the resources knowledge and capabilities among the government, smallholder farmers, NGOs, traders and processors though trust, relationships, interactions and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

A sixth typology aims to stimulate institutional, technological, commercial and organizational innovation (article #11). This MSP shares the resources knowledge, trademarks, capabilities, cash and crops among agricultural research organizations, universities, NGOs, the private sector, smallholder farmers, R&D organizations, the government, traders, processors and supermarkets through formal rules, characteristic- based trust, informal rules, interactions, networks and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.

Based on these six typologies some differences can be noticed in resources, actors and mechanisms between them. The sixth (all the innovations) and the first (institutional innovation) typology share the most resources and the sixth also comprises the most actors and mechanisms in MSPs. The remaining typologies share basically only the resources knowledge and capabilities (besides the first and the second typology). The difference between the first and second (technological innovation) typology consists of the tangible

resources land and equipment. Furthermore, the first and the fourth typology only comprise non-business and business actors. Whereas the other typologies mostly comprise the government, smallholder farmers, the private sector and NGOs. Additionally, the typologies comprise mostly informal and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms, whereby the first, fifth (institutional/technological and commercial innovation) and the sixth typology use some form of trust. However, one important difference is also important to mention, as the sixth typology is the only one that is based on one article and thus not based on a set of samples.

5. Discussion

In Chapter 3 “Key elements of MSPs” the classification of MSPs has been made, whereby the governance mechanisms (e.g. resources, actors, process of sharing) and the innovations (e.g. technological, institutional/political, commercial and organizational) have been discussed widely. However, when the 16 articles in the SLR where analysed, it turned out to be that most intangible (e.g. patents, franchises, goodwill and copyrights) and tangible resources (e.g. vehicles, machinery, furniture, inventory, stock and bonds) did not have any importance in the MSPs. Moreover, when taking a look at the six typologies that have been generated in Chapter 4 “Literature review”, it appeared even more that most resources where not shared in many typologies, besides knowledge and capabilities. However, this seems logic, as Multi-stakeholder platforms bring together complementary institutional capabilities and human resources in forms such as skills, experiences and ideas in order to tackle common problems which go beyond the capacity of one single organization to create innovations (Kefasi et al., 2011).

The same situation applies to actors, even when various actors have been added as bottom-up codes after the “Literature review”, it seemed that only smallholder farmers, the government, NGOs and the private sector were the major actors in most typologies. This can be explained by a study of Dentoni and Peterson (2011) which showed that the approach of the majority of agribusiness firms has not been to include a wide elaborate engagement of various actors outside their supply chain subsequently.

When taking a look at the process of sharing, it occurred that formal (e.g. contracts and some new bottom-up codes), informal (e.g. some form of trust) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms where considered to be important in MSPs after the analysis of the 16 articles. However, after the generation of the six typologies only informal (e.g. relationships, networks, interactions and some form of trust) and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms where the most prevalent mechanisms.

Because of all this, the six typologies have showed some linkages between the governance mechanisms and some type of innovations, whereby typology 2 and 6 have the strongest linkages. Concerning the remaining typologies, it is difficult to distinguish them from each other, as they show a lot of similarities (see section “Literature review”) and it has to keep in mind that the sixth typology is only based on one article and thus not on a set of samples. A critical note should be added to this, as the SLR only consists of 16 articles (which seemed to be enough, as the process of coding led to more or less the same results in the tables) it would have probably made a difference if the SLR consisted of some more articles.

A final remark should be made regarding the governance mechanism resources concerning ‘capital’. This resource could have made a difference in the section “Literature review” and thus in the generation of typologies as it appears that five different types of assets/ capitals have been distinguished such as human, social, natural, physical and financial capital. They are

those resources that are required in order to participate in global Agro-food chains in a sustainable and meaningful way (Bitzer et al., 2013). This means that however this research has made some linkages between governance mechanisms and the type of innovations of MSPs, there is still room for improvement. Therefore, it is recommended that any further research should continue on making linkages in the area of Multi-stakeholder platforms.

6. Conclusion

During this research the classification of MSPs is based on the governance mechanisms (e.g. actors, resources and process of sharing), which are the key elements of those platforms accordingly. Those governance mechanisms formed the basis for the theoretical framework of this research and made a clearer definition of MSP possible. A MSP is basically a hybrid form of transaction coordination and consists of some formal and informal elements. All kind of actors take part in this platform and come together in order to find a common approach to an issue that affects them all, whereby diversity among the actors will maximize the chances to create and implement a system innovation consequently. The resource pool consists especially of tangible and intangible resources, whereby section 3.3 elaborated even more on knowledge and capabilities (both intangible resources) and those seem to be the most important resources that need to be shared in MSPs accordingly. In a MSP, a contract is mostly a formal process of sharing and variations of this also occurred to exist in Chapter 4 "Literature review". Moreover, forms of trust, relationships, networks, interactions are informal processes of sharing. Besides this, communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms are indispensable in MSPs in order to lead to a certain innovation. Hereby it appeared that technological, commercial, organizational, institutional/political innovations (which were mentioned in 3.2) and even combinations of those occurred to exist in Chapter 4. All these results have resulted to six typologies (see table 6) and thus to a linkage between the governance mechanisms of MSPs and what they are for.

Typology #	Governance mechanisms	Innovation
Typology 1	Knowledge, capabilities, information on new technologies, crops, the non-business and business actors, relationships, interactions, networks, characteristic- based trust, informal and formal documents and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.	Institutional/political innovation
Typology 2	Knowledge, capabilities, information on new technologies, land, equipment, crops, smallholder farmers, researchers, NGOs, policymakers, the government, the private sector, interactions and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.	Technological innovation
Typology 3	Knowledge and capabilities, smallholder farmers, NGOs, the government, the private sector, relationships and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.	Commercial innovation
Typology 4	Knowledge, capabilities, non-business and business actors, relationships, networks and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.	Organizational innovation

Typology 5	Knowledge, capabilities, the government, smallholder farmers, NGOs, traders, processors, trust, relationships, interactions and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.	Institutional/political, technological and commercial innovation
Typology 6	Knowledge, trademarks, capabilities, cash, crops, agricultural research organizations, universities, NGOs, the private sector, smallholder farmers, R&D organizations, the government, traders, processors, supermarkets, formal rules, characteristic- based trust, informal rules, interactions, networks and communication, decision and negotiation mechanisms.	Institutional/political, technological, commercial and organizational innovation

Table 6: *"Main typologies of MSPs in the Agro-food sector."*

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