



**NBS
EduWORLD**



Multi-level governance and NBS Lecture (online)

Credit: PPMI

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Learning Outcomes for this Learning Unit

- Introduce the concept of multi-level governance (MLG) and NBS
- Identify multi-level governance challenges for successful NBS
- Tips for setting up collaborative MLG NBS processes
- Highlight how the MLG settings impact the delivery of NBS projects
- Extract insights from lessons learnt from case studies

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A wide, muddy-brown river winds through the center of the image. On the left side, a paved road runs parallel to the river, with several buildings and structures along its edge. The majority of the land is divided into numerous small, irregularly shaped green fields, likely used for agriculture. The overall scene depicts a typical rural setting with a mix of natural and human-made elements.

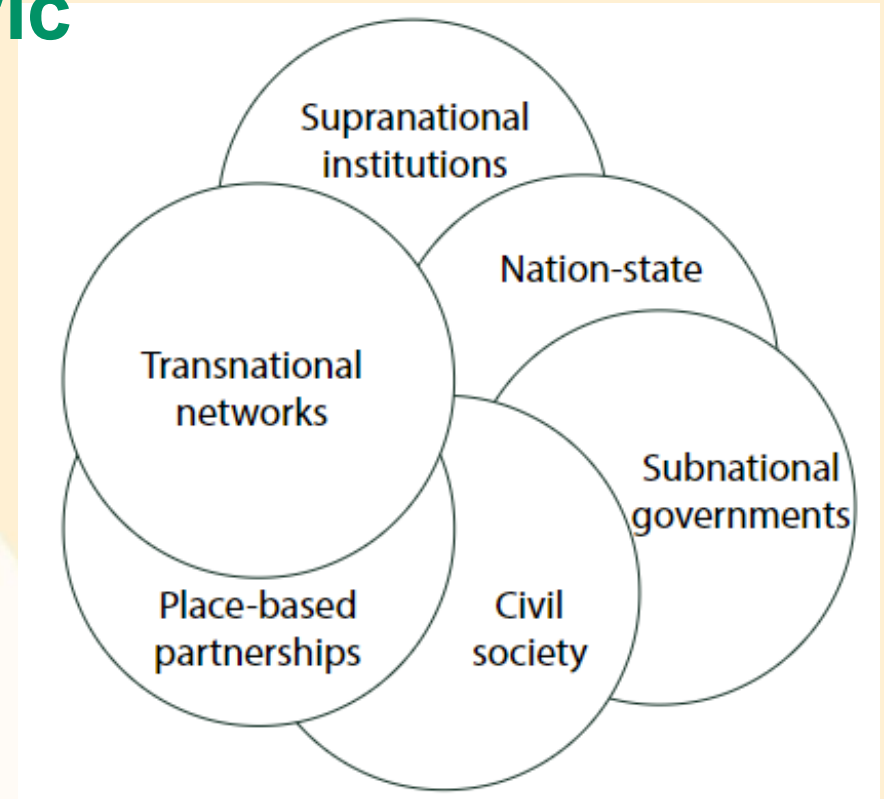
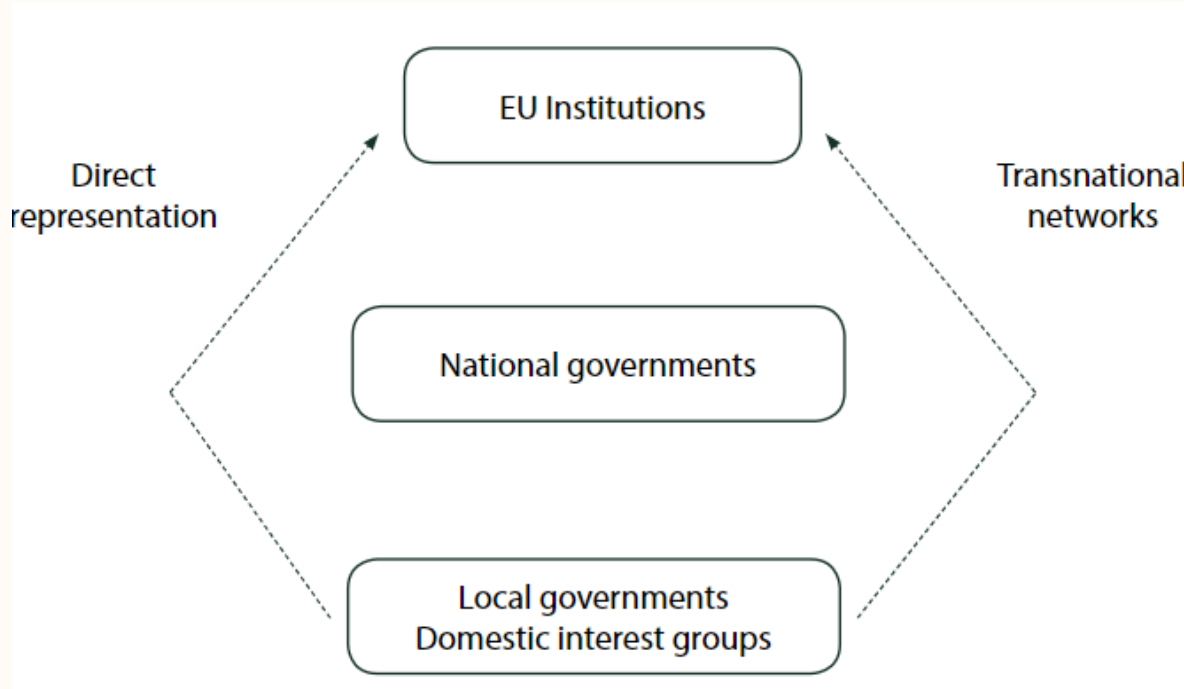
INTRODUCTION TO MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE AND NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Definition of Multi-Level Governance (MLG)

- Most definitions defined MLG as **the way power or authority is distributed between jurisdictions within and beyond states at different levels.**
- Multi-level in the sense of numerous state and non-state actors located at local sub-national and global supranational levels.
- States are no longer the (only) central actors of policy-making in most countries.
- The degree of de-centralisation or globalisation characterising MLG structures vary between countries.

Source: Hooghe, Liesbet, Marks, Gary and Arjan H. Schakel (27 April 2023) Multilevel governance. In Comparative Politics, ed. Daniele Caramani. <https://www.oxfordpoliticstrove.com/display/10.1093/hepl/9780192846051.001.0001/hepl-9780192846051-chapter-12>
Cairney, Paul; Heikkila, Tanya; Wood, Matthew (28 February 2019). *Making Policy in a Complex World* (1 ed.). Cambridge University Press. [doi:10.1017/9781108679053](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108679053). ISBN 978-1-108-67905-3. S2CID 159046216.

MLG types: nested versus polycentric



Source: Bulkeley, Harriet, Davies, Anna, Evans, Bob, Gibbs, David, Kern Kristine and Kate Theobald (24 June 2010) Environmental Governance and Transnational Municipal Networks in Europe, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 5:3, 235-254, DOI: 10.1080/1523908032000154179

Environmental MLG and ecosystem-services governance

- Eco services and earth system governance is usually described in a polycentric way, focusing on policy instruments that involve local communities.
- Collaborative, co-creating and participatory governance approaches preferred for improved environmental outputs and achieving long-term commitment and inclusion.
- Not uncontroversial – links to trends such as deregulation of financial markets and power transfer to private actors (who may have vested interests) → state still a role to play to critically steer the process.
- In practice: local level environmental policy administration strengthened across Europe

Katarina Eckerberg & Marko Joas (2004) Multi-level Environmental Governance: a concept under stress?, *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 9:5, 405-412, DOI: 10.1080/1354983042000255315

Why taking an MLG approach to NBS (1)

- MLG provides opportunities for civil society claims to ‘seep into’ lower levels of governance. Civil society is at the heart of NBS design and actions.
- NBS has participation and inclusion as its core. Polycentric MLG is naturally suitable for NBS. NBS provides great opportunities for co-creation.
- Partnering up with other authorities and actors can create more secure and stable conditions to attract investment in NBS and make long-term NBS project more financially stable

Coopenergy (2015) A Guide to Multi-Level Governance for Local and Regional Public Authorities.

<https://www.local2030.org/library/210/A-Guide-to-Multi-level-Governance-For-Local-and-Regional-Public-Authorities.pdf>

Why taking an MLG approach to NBS (2)

- Public authorities can combine their expertise to benefit the planning process of NBS and ensure coherency between local and regional plans
- Develop clear and consistent visions: sharing knowledge and ideas between authorities can enable ambitious and realistic visions to be created
- Defining objectives collaboratively ensures that messages are harmonised between stakeholders (avoiding confusion)
- Through joint-working different skills, planning techniques and resources can be combined to make limited resources go further, taking advantage of economies of scale, for instance through joint procurement

Coopenergy (2015) A Guide to Multi-Level Governance for Local and Regional Public Authorities.

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PRACTICAL TIPS AND INSPIRATION

Implementing collaborative MLG for NBS

- Highlights: identify stakeholders and their needs, develop a common vision, and way forward for further deliberation, communication, consider timing and context

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Step 1. Initiate the collaborative process

- A) Identify the regional authority's needs
- B) Identify key stakeholders
- C) Identify their level of participation
- D) Develop a common vision and objectives

Step 2. Developing the MLG model

- A) Define the coordination and governance processes
- B) Develop the engagement strategy
- C) Define responsibilities and decision-making process
- D) Define the evaluation process

Step 3. Implementing the MLG model

- A) Mobilise stakeholders and formalise their commitment
- B) Evaluate and improve the MLG model

Consider the MLG settings

- The MLG setting urban actors find themselves in enable or hinder policy effectiveness.
- Different MLG settings warrant different strategies in promoting NBS and NBS-friendly policies.

Source: Cucca, R. and C. Ranci (2021) Urban Policy in Times of Crisis: The Policy Capacity of European Cities and the Role of Multi-Level Governance Original Manuscript. Urban Affairs Review. 10.1177/10780874211041710.

	High Degree of regulatory local autonomy	Low Degree of regulatory local autonomy
Weak Financial support from the state	Unsupported localism	Constrained localism
Strong Financial support from the state	Supported localism	Centralism

Good practice example (1)

- The **Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur** region in **France** has created a guide to assist local governments in integrating sustainable development into their urban planning documents (PLUs). This guide provides tools and practical examples of climate-friendly urban planning strategies. Find out more:

<http://www.coopenergy.eu/gp/provence-alpes-c%C3%B4te-d%E2%80%99azur-fr-planning-guidelines>

Good practice example (2)

- Local and regional authorities sign up in the thousands to the **Covenant of Mayors** (CoM) and ‘**Mayors Adapt**’, creating climate action plans and building alliances for peer learning. CoM is the main European initiative bringing together local and regional authorities to reach and surpass climate and environmental goals.

KEY CHALLENGES AND TAKE-AWAYS



Key challenges within NBS governance (1)

1. Vertical and horizontal dispersion

- Eco-system services beneficiaries and providers are dispersed vertically and at multiple governance levels and across sectors
- There are certain institutional cultural characteristics and logistics that can act as barriers to smooth collaboration and communication
- The governance framework must accommodate participatory, adaptive, and transparent processes to address power imbalances and ensure legitimacy.

2. Diverse actors and values

- Governance efforts often face challenges in aligning policy instruments across different scales and sectors. Policies that work well for one group (e.g., local communities) may conflict with those designed for others (e.g., national economic goals).
- Need to balance the interests of stakeholders with differing values, from local communities to global beneficiaries.
- Differing cultural and ideological perceptions of nature (e.g., intrinsic versus utilitarian values) add complexity to governance negotiations.

3. Knowledge gaps

- Significant gaps remain in understanding ecosystem processes and their societal impacts. This uncertainty complicates policy design.
- Crucial to strengthen the science-policy interface when engaging in NBS.

4. Skills gaps

- Many countries, especially in the developing world, face a lack of technical and financial resources to implement effective governance strategies for ES. For example, monitoring and evaluating ES (e.g., carbon sequestration) often require advanced skills and resources that are not always available locally.
- Implementing inclusive and adaptive governance processes requires stakeholders with the necessary skills to facilitate negotiations, mediate conflicts, and engage diverse actors. Many regions lack trained personnel for such roles.

Conclusion

- Implementing NBS undoubtedly requires close collaboration with communities.
- MLG is primarily a theory for understanding relations and coordination mechanisms and not itself a recipe for impactful actions in the field of NBS.
- In order for MLG in NBS context to be effective, several steps needs to be taken during the MLG process such as clarifying a common vision, roles and responsibilities and making an engagement plan.
- Understanding the MLG setting and theories can help local NBS actors design and strategise for more effective NBS, tackling key challenges.



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