

# Brokering the co-production of knowledge in the context of a warming world

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Wiki says:

*“A broker is an independent party, whose services are used extensively in some industries. A broker's prime responsibility is to bring sellers and buyers together and thus a broker is the third-person facilitator between a buyer and a seller.”*

In short, a broker (technically) is someone who eventually gets paid to help facilitate something. But they don't 'produce' the output itself and are supposed to be independent.

A distinction is made between a 'broker' and an 'agent' – the latter acts on behalf of another to relate with a third party

'Brokering' falls down when there are vested interests – sub prime mortgages...

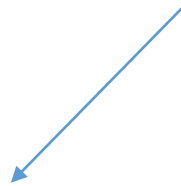


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‘Other 1’



‘Broker’



‘Other 2’

- ‘Researcher’?
- Broker of co-production?



## Questions:

What is the role of a broker in the process of knowledge co-production?

## This depends on:

What is being brokered, why brokering is occurring, by whom and for whom?

Context: Working in a world of rapid change

## THREE EXAMPLES



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# Context: Knowledge in a world of change



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**Transformation is inevitable**  
**Climate change changes everything**



# Demand is rapidly growing for 'how to' knowledge



TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD:

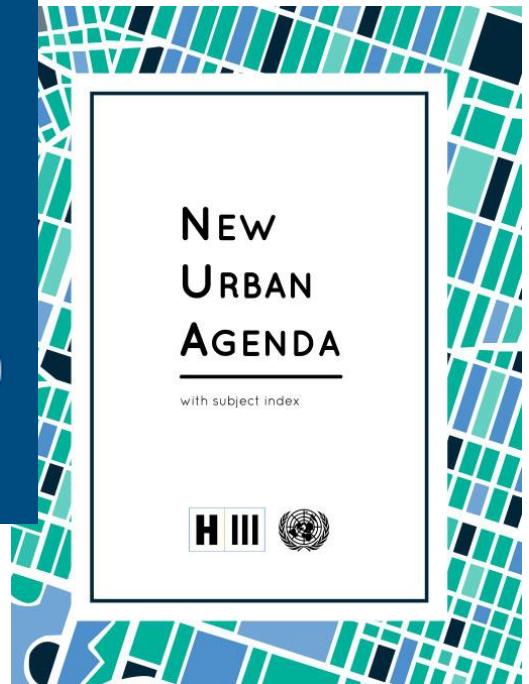
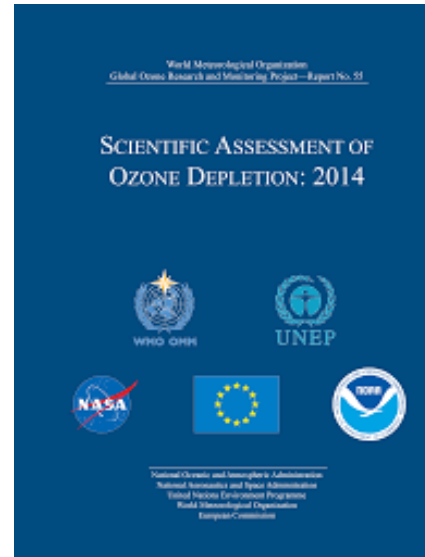


THE 2030 AGENDA FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

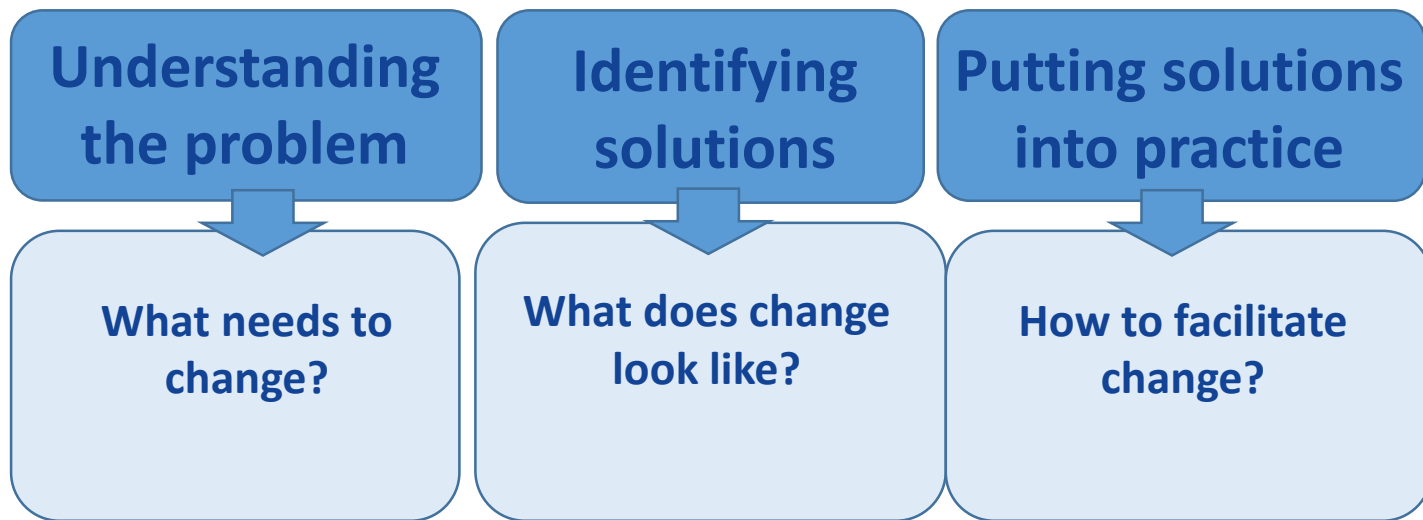
UNITED NATIONS  
**PARIS CLIMATE  
AGREEMENT**  
SIGNING CEREMONY  
— 22 APRIL 2016 —



**ipcc**  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON  
climate change



**But in research, we often aren't focusing on 'how to'**



***You can't learn to ride a bicycle just by watching a powerpoint presentation: You have to get on and fall off and learn"***

**(D. Tabara pers. com. 2017)**



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To develop knowledge about 'how to' we need  
to get our hands dirty to learn how to make  
change happen.

The role of a broker is thus more than about  
knowledge, its also about brokering change

i.e. purposeful co-production of knowledge  
or co-creation of change



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What is being brokered?

What is the brokering for?

Who is brokering? (researchers?)

Who is being 'brokered'?

Can/should brokers be independent in the process (i.e. are they really brokers)?



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# Three examples



# **1. Building Prototype Floating Homes in Bangladesh**



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# Bangladesh

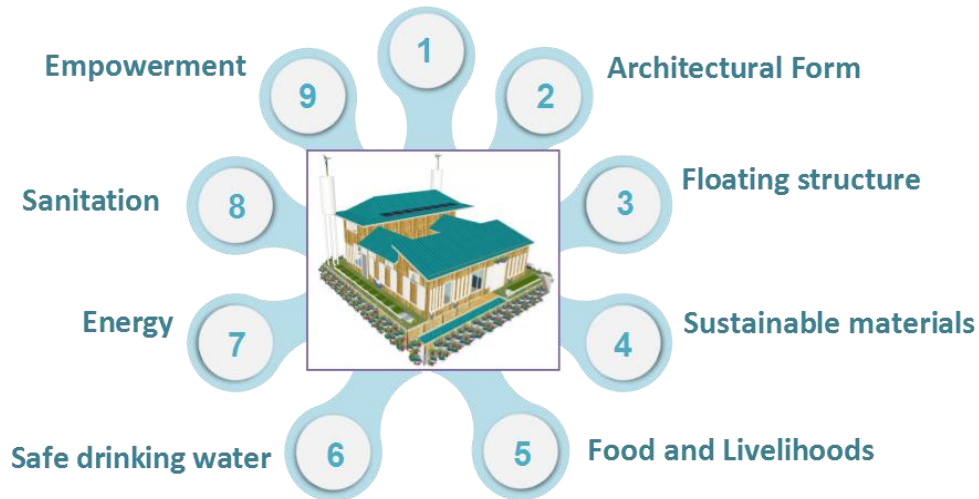
## Large floods:

- Can affect two-thirds of the country ( $\sim 95,000$  sq. km<sup>2</sup>), 100 million people;
- Destroy homes and livelihood assets
- Exacerbate diverse social and economic challenges
- Inundate homes for 5 months of the year



# Prototype floating homes

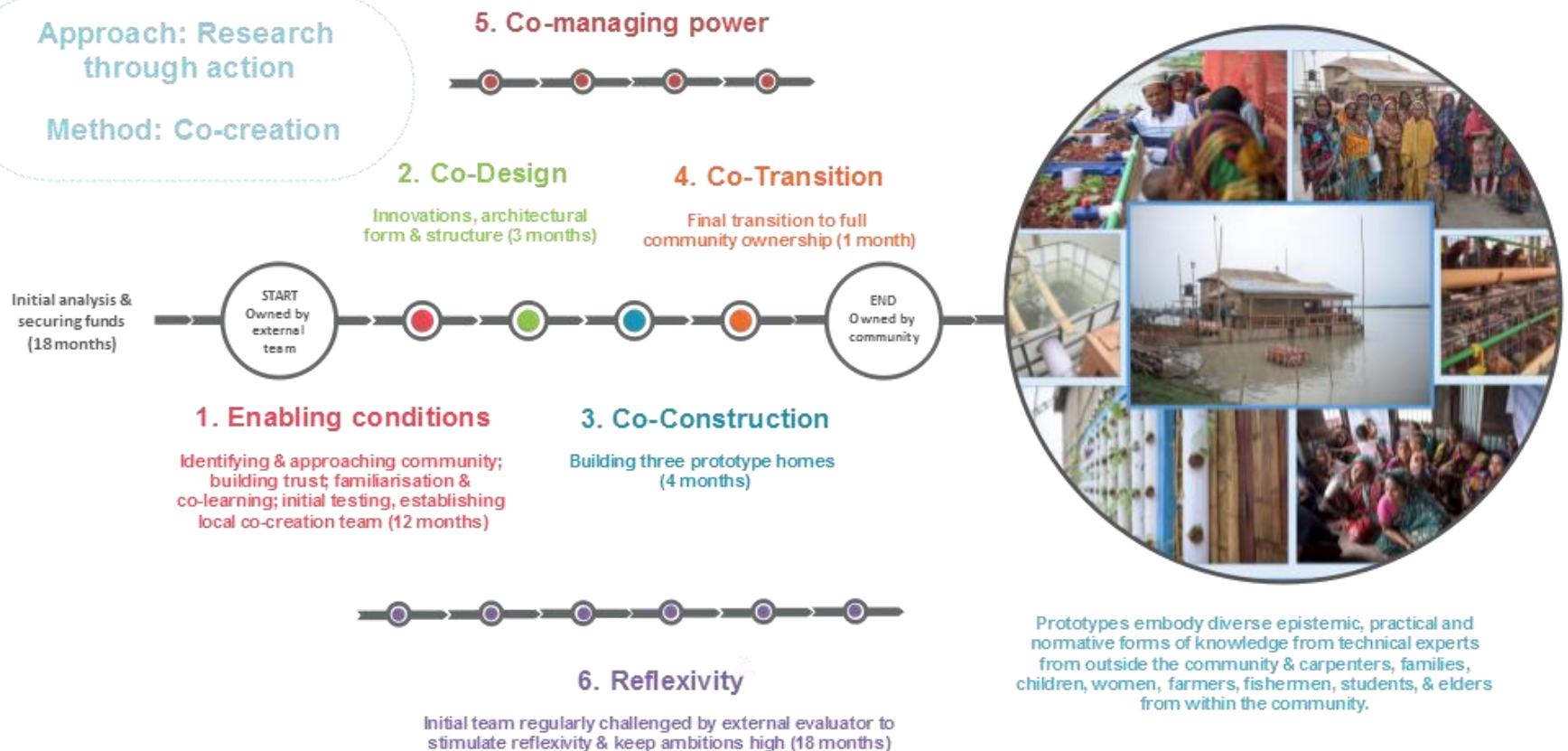
## Concept of an Integrated Flood Resilient Home





Approach: Research  
through action

Method: Co-creation



Dimension	Bangladesh
What is brokered?	Knowledge about problems, innovations, design, materials, cultures, and construction PLUS co-creation of new 'artefacts' PLUS management of power
Why is it being brokered?	To co-produce new 'artefacts'
Who is it between?	Researchers, local community members, other stakeholders
On behalf of?	A funder
By whom?	Researchers, with some directive and facilitative intensions
Role of 'broker'	Knowledge co-creation, facilitation, project delivery
Independence of broker	LOW/MEDIUM– mostly driving process

## **2. Climate Resilience Communities, Scottish Borders**



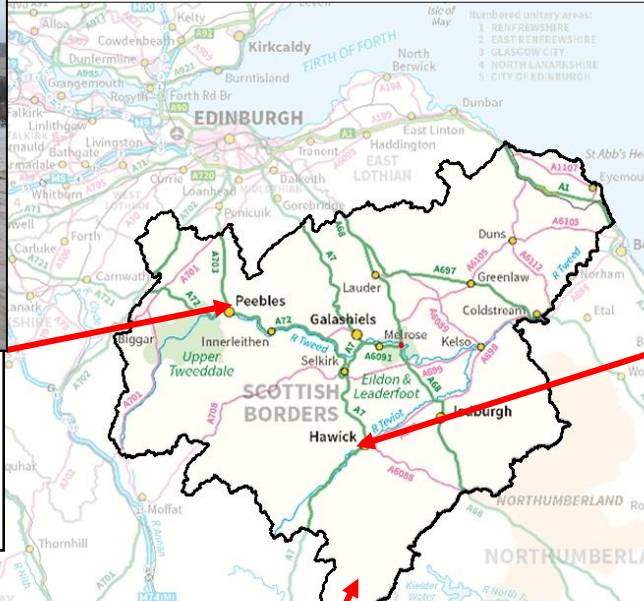
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# The action-research setting



Peebles

- Third largest town (c. 8,000)
- Historic Spa town
- Popular commuter town (23 miles from Edinburgh)



Hawick

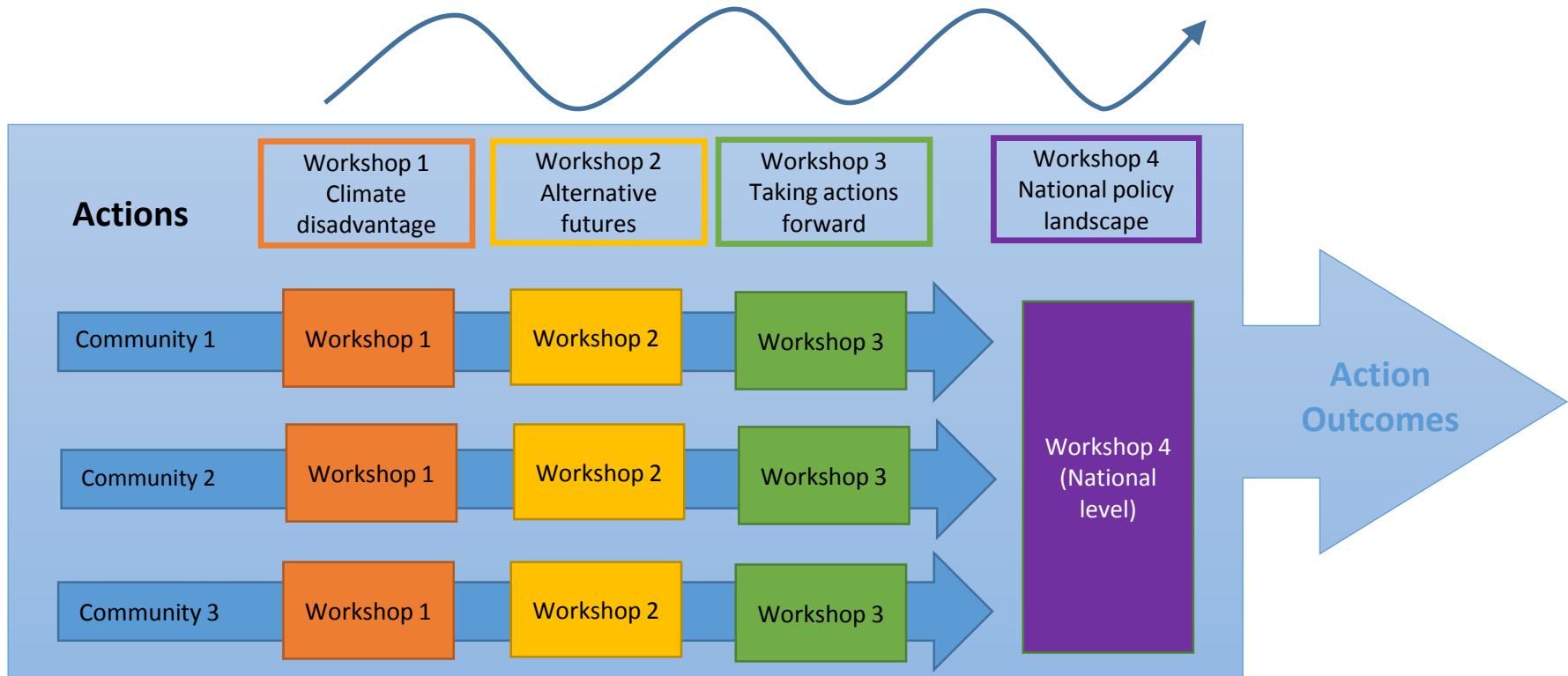
- One of largest town (c. 14,000)
- South of central belt
- Historic textile mill town
- Distinct cultural identity



Newcastleton

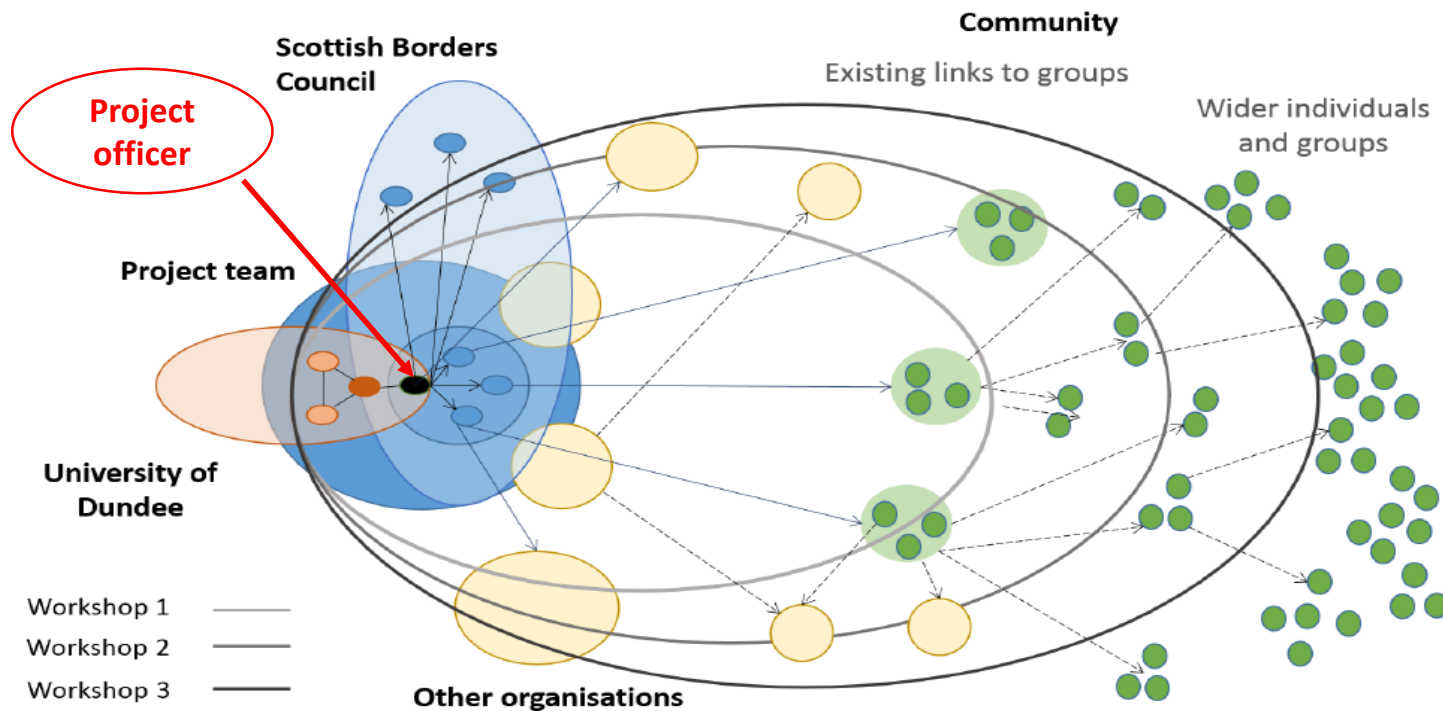
- Remote, Small village on Border (c. 750 people)
- Planned village by one of biggest Estates in UK
- Historically accessible by railway
- Very autonomous

Research Findings: the 'what'



Research on process:  
the 'how'

# Get in, getting messy!



**MESSY – who decides? Who drives?  
Who facilitates? Who is independent**



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Dimension	Scottish Borders
What is brokered?	Knowledge about problems, futures, actions, while also managing power & politics, driving process
Why is it being brokered?	To co-produce integrative knowledge and action
Who is it between?	Local community members, local government and other stakeholders
On behalf of?	A funder and in collaboration with the local authority
By whom?	Researchers, with some directive and facilitative actions
Role of 'broker'	Facilitation, project delivery and research
Independence of broker	MEDIUM (embedded officer) & MEDIUM (PI researcher) & HIGH (Semi-independent evaluator)

# Change in Louisiana, U.S.A.



CENTER *for*  
PLANNING  
EXCELLENCE

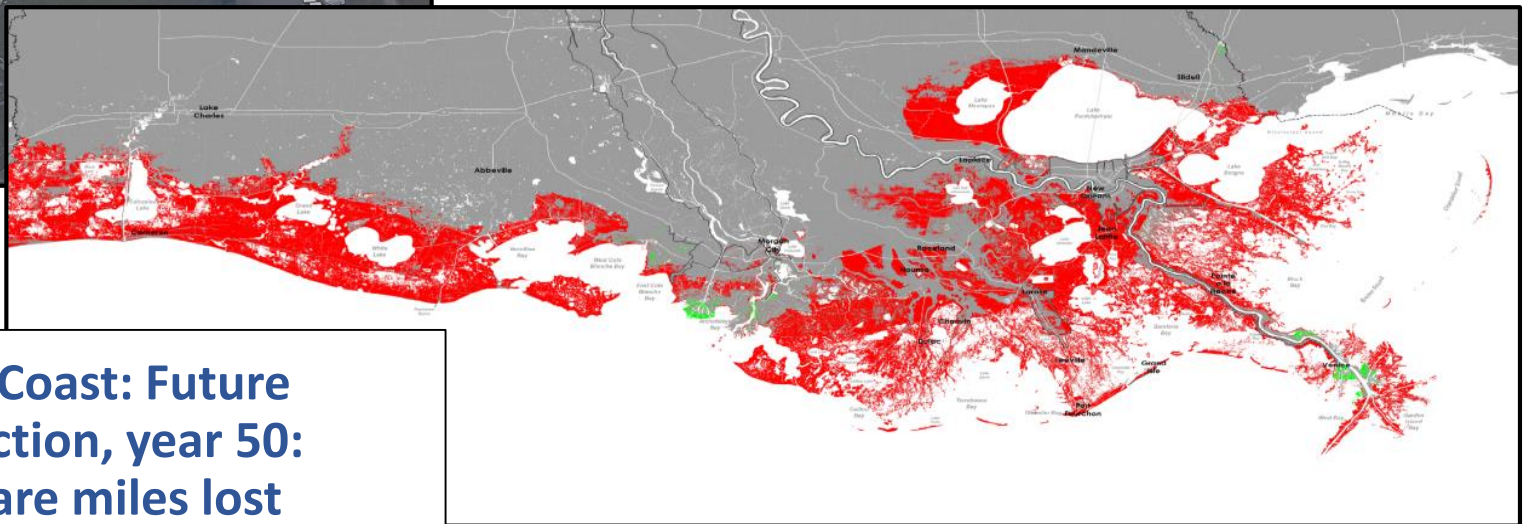


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# History and Development in Louisiana



Mississippi River Commission



**Louisiana Coast: Future  
without action, year 50:  
4,123 square miles lost**





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Dimension	Louisiana Coastal Region
What is brokered?	Knowledge about problems, anticipatory knowledge about future possible action, with a goal to stimulate change
Why is it being brokered?	Future transformative planning and action
Who is it between?	Senior leaders in Louisiana Government
On behalf of?	A planning NGO and the Governor
By whom?	Researchers, but with facilitator hats screwed on
Role of 'broker'	Facilitator, with no vested interest in outcome
Degree of independence of broker	HIGH

# Degree of independence of the 'broker'

Higher

X

X

X

Lower

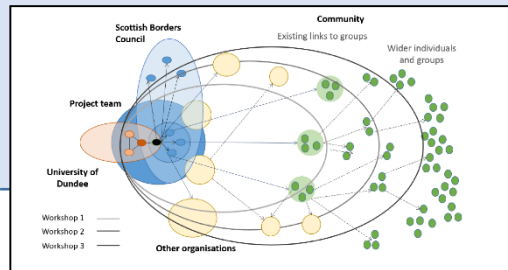
## Louisiana

- Clearer separation of facilitators from actors and outcomes
- Made easier with intermediary & less vested interest of facilitators who 'step aside' from facilitation



## Scottish Borders

- Different degrees of separation, depending on the broker involved
- Some checks and balances in place – e.g. more independent evaluator
- A collaborator, but this complicates issues - vested interests and unclear roles/aims



## Bangladesh

- Less separation of brokers from actors and outcomes
- Brokers have vested interest and need to deliver outcomes
- But – also mechanisms to help handover the stick



Emphasis on co-production of knowledge

Emphasis on co-creation of change



# What does this tell us?

- Independence matters
- Is this the most important hallmark of a broker?
- Are brokers then just facilitators?
- Note: Professional facilitators don't take on work when they are not independent
- Likely to be few occasions when we are genuinely operating as an independent broker
- Does this matter?
- We need to be clearer about what we mean when invoking the 'broker' metaphor – brokering of what, for what, by whom and for whom?



# Question

**When is brokering brokering and  
when is it not?**

Brokering of what?

Brokering for what?

Brokering by whom?

Brokering for whom?



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