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The Interplay of Digital Platforms and Boundaries during Multisectoral Partnership

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), e.g., ending poverty, fighting inequalities, and protecting the planet guides organizations on how to have a positive impact in the world. With the increased difficulty for individual organizations to achieve the goals, it is becoming essential for organizations to collaborate with their stakeholders, e.g., other organizations, government institutions, NGOs, communities, and customers. Hence, multisectoral partnerships (MSPs) is required, so stakeholders can seek complementary expertise and resources across the different sectors and geographical boundaries to try to achieve the SDG goals. In the context of MSPs collaboration, boundaries matter when they impede stakeholders working together due to the differences (e.g., geographic location, ethical viewpoints, knowledge) between them. Hence, an increasing number of studies have explored how to improve communication and collaboration across boundaries (e.g., Levina & Vaast 2008; Leonardi et al., 2019; Leong et al., 2018). These studies emphasize that objects—both digital and physical—offer a valuable way to overcome collaborative issues that develop due to the boundaries that demarcate organizations. Technology as an object, e.g., digital platforms (DPs) plays a crucial role in understanding the processes organizations follow to build relationships in ways that help them to work across boundaries.

Hence, we turn attention to the boundary management lens (Jarvenpaa & Lang 2011; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005) to understand the set of deliberations that informs the formulation of approaches with which, stakeholders can manage their network of relationships on a digital platform. Also, given the twin nature of a boundary in creating agreement and conflicts, boundary management allows the understanding of how organizations can manage a network of collaborations from unrelated interests (Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2011; O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008). Further, a DP would have its materiality that would shape how the actors use it to achieve their objectives. Actors would enact their meaning, and use of the DP in practice, which can differ across boundaries, or the materiality of the DP can be at interplay at with the boundaries they mediate (Leonardi et al., 2019). Hence, to theorize how DPs and boundaries interplay during MSPs, we also draw on the literature of collective affordances of digital technologies (see Leonardi, 2013; Zheng & Yu, 2016).

Nonetheless, the underlying focus of the many of the studies that explore how DPs could facilitate otherwise impeded cooperation and exchanges is mainly economic and market-driven (e.g., Facin et al., 2016; Hagiu, 2014; Leong et al., 2018). Studies are yet to explore the ways that DPs are used at boundaries as a mechanism to facilitate MSPs for sustainable objectives. In this paper, we seek to explore how these perspectives (boundary management and collective affordances) could be integrated to understand how DPs are useful for MSPs across boundaries for achieving the SDGs. Understanding the mechanisms that drive the ways that DPs are used at boundaries to facilitate MSP for sustainable objectives would contribute to the information

systems and management literature. Ultimately, we posit that boundary management and collective affordance of digital technology is a promising way to understand how DPs and boundaries interplay during MSPs. This approach demonstrates that a holistic approach is adopted to understand the processes required to develop MSPs that contribute to the SDGs. This approach could help leaders from business, government, and civic organizations understand how MSPs can enable the achievement of the SDGs.

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