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Convening the climate pledge: a transorganizational development case study of Amazon's role as convener

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CONVENING THE CLIMATE PLEDGE: A TRANSORGANIZATIONAL

DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY OF AMAZON'S ROLE AS CONVENER

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Abstract

The present case study research details Amazon's role as the convener of The Climate Pledge (TCP), a transorganizational system of over 400 signatories as of 2023 collaborating to address the climate crisis and issues surrounding the decarbonization of the global economy. The study answered one central question: How did Amazon's role as a convener impact TCP, as experienced by stakeholders? Study participants were Amazon employees working for TCP. Data sources included interviews, TCP public announcements, and internal communications. The study determined that Amazon utilized robust action tactics from 2019-2023, indicative of a Convener. Findings indicated that Amazon's future convening strategy involves crafting an environment for organic interorganizational collaboration between signatories through joint-collaboration initiatives and the Passport platform launched in May 2023. Findings also identified Amazon's TCP-specific organizational capabilities developed to (a) grow the signatory base to more than 400 organizations, (b) author and publish 81 pieces on theclimatepledge.com website, and (c) facilitate several joint-collaboration initiatives in pursuit of carbon net neutrality. Additional research of this case is suggested, using data collection methods of holistic interviewing, observation, and analysis of network communication within Amazon's Passport platform for TCP signatories, and investigation into the role of storytelling as a key capability for Conveners.

Keywords: Convener, Transorganizational Development, Transorganizational System, Interorganizational Collaboration, Climate Change, Carbon Net Zero, Carbon Net Neutrality

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Chapter 1

Introduction

What do Amazon, Iceland Foods, and IBM have in common? All are signatories

of the Climate Pledge, a network of corporations promising to reach the climate change

mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement 10 years early. Along with these three

organizations, over 400 other signatories of The Climate Pledge (TCP) have committed

to "working together to crack the climate crisis and solve the challenges of decarbonizing

our economy" (The Climate Pledge, 2023b). But how exactly do these titans of industry

work together to achieve this ambitious goal? This research examines the answer to this

question, but first, sets the stage for the complex challenge these organizations face.

Research Setting: Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, and the Climate Pledge

Global average temperature has increased about 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees

Fahrenheit) from 1901 to 2016, correlating to dangerous and severe impacts to our health,

environment, and economy (US EPA, 2021). At the time of writing, global warming

breached an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) for eleven days.

This eleven-day period marks the first time since the dawn of the industrial age that the

world exceeded this level of global warming, which is considered a threshold for severe

climate change (PBS NewsHour, 2023). In response to warming global temperatures as a

result of the industrial age, 196 United Nations parties signed the Paris Agreement in

November 2016, binding together to achieve net zero carbon emissions by the year 2050.

In response to and in support of the Paris Agreement, Amazon co-founded TCP in

2019 with Global Optimism (GO), the latter of which is an organization created by the

co-authors of the Paris Agreement that "…invites and inspires people and businesses

from all over the world to face the climate crisis head on and take action towards a

regenerative future" (Global Optimism, 2023, para. 13). These co-founders of the Climate Pledge prescribed three commitments tenets of its fellow signatories, or members: 1) "measure and report greenhouse gas emissions on a regular basis," 2) "implement decarbonization strategies in line with the Paris Agreement through business change and innovations," and 3) "neutralize any remaining emissions with additional…offsets to achieve net zero annual carbon emission by 2040" (The Climate Pledge, 2023f). From 2019 to the time of writing in July 2023, TCP has grown to include over 400 signatories, representing 55 industries, 38 countries, and 9.61M employees. To accelerate the work of TCP, Amazon also in 2020 founded The Climate Pledge Fund, a corporate venture capital fund that invests in clean technology startups that join the Pledge. From 2020-2023, The Climate Pledge Fund has invested into 22 signatories, including Carbon Cure, a producer of low-carbon concrete, Rivian, an electric vehicle manufacturer, and Infinium, a producer of low-carbon diesel and jet fuel (The Climate Pledge Fund, 2023). TCP's website lists the 400+ signatories (The Climate Pledge, 2023a), includes Spotlight articles about signatories' progress to decarbonize their respective organizations, and includes videos depicting how signatories work collaboratively. Two such collaborations, depicted in TCP's "Future Forward" documentary series, were Amazon electrifying its delivery vehicle fleet in partnership with Rivian and JetBlue's partnership with Neste to utilize low-carbon aviation fuel for its passenger jets (The Climate Pledge Team, 2019).

Another notable feature of TCP's website is a landing page inviting signatories of the Pledge to join Passport. With its own separate login, the TCP website describes Passport as "the place where signatories of The Climate Pledge come together" and "our virtual destination for climate action" (The Climate Pledge, 2023e). Launched in May

2023, Passport serves as an exclusive virtual platform for TCP signatories to collaborate. The website lists features like "real-time discussions, forums, and instant messages" as media by which the signatories logged into the platform may communicate with one another.

Understanding the interorganizational processes that sustain TCP is crucial because the collective effort of TCP's members represents a source of great potential in addressing one of the Earth's biggest challenges. However, no known academic research has explored the interorganizational domain of these over 400 impactful businesses as they pursue their common goal.

Relevant Existing Research

While no known academic research has studied the interorganizational machinations of TCP, research abounds that relates to this subject and forms a context for its analysis. One body of research pertinent to TCP's interorganizational domain is the Transorganizational System (TS) and Transorganizational Development (TD) (Ainsworth & Feyerherm, 2016; The Climate Pledge, 2023b; Cummings, 1984; Cummings et al., 1983; Emery & Trist, 1965; Ferraro et al., 2015; Rittel & Webber, 1973). TCP is comprised of more than 400 organizations, held together by the robust coordinating energy of two member organizations, around the highly complex "wicked problem," "Grand Challenge," or "Mess" that is climate change. Featured member organizations in TSs, much like TCP, distinguish themselves as conveners, which assert themselves as coordinators of collective, transorganizational action (Alexander, 2020; Dorado and Vaz, 2003; Kalegaonkar and Brown, 2000; McDermott et al., 2018; Sedgwick et al., 2022; van Hille et al., 2019). Other constituent members of a TS are often labeled referent organizations, which receive the authority to perform coordinating action projected upon

them by the TS's constituent organizations (Brès et al., 2018; DuBow et al., 2018; Lippincott, 1994; Trist, 1983).

Another concept that contextualizes this case study of TCP is collective impact. Collective impact is a form of TD across public, private, and nonprofit sectors (Kania and Kramer, 2011). This reified system of cross-sectoral collaboration has reached a significant level of popularity in practice and in scholarship in the past decade (Weaver, 2014). Recent scholarly literature on collective impact offers considerations on mindsets to approach transorganizational systems tackling complex problems (Kania et al., 2014), a whole systems method of collective impact evaluation (Parkhurst & Preskill, 2014), and case studies to situate collective impact within concrete experience (Dolamore & Kline, 2020; Smart, 2017). While TCP does not meet the specific criteria of collective impact and is not subjected to the collective impact system of change, the scholarly literature around the subject yields practical insights for this study.

Yet another related body of literature explores the practice of interorganizational collaboration. Examples of studies that inform this subject include psychological studies of the group dynamics present in interorganizational collaborations (Schruijer, 2020; Tsasis, 2009; Woo, 2021; Zhang and Ghuler, 2020;) and case studies of interorganizational collaborations in various industries and levels of complexity (Das, 2021; Erikson and Larsson, 2020; Shree et al., 2020; Solansky and Beck, 2020). Similar to collective impact's body of research, interorganizational collaboration can contextualize the motivations for and processes by which the 400+ signatories of TCP may collaborate with Amazon and with one another.

In addition to literature in the interorganizational domain, extensive academic research exists studying the objective of the Climate Pledge: achieving net zero carbon

emissions to reduce the impact of climate change. For example, several case studies shine a light upon the progress of participating nations in the Paris Agreement (Dasgupta and Robinson, 2021; Nsabimana, et al., 2022; Simshauser and Gilmore, 2022; Waidelich et al., 2022). Additional studies examine the evolution of macro-level political and economic changes in the aftermath of the Paris Agreement (Holland et al., 2021).

The total body of contemporary research related to the subject of this study consists of the interorganizational theory (transorganizational development, the convener, referent organizations, collective impact, and interorganizational collaboration) and sustainability policy and phenomena at the macro-level (how national economies and global industries are affecting and have been affected by the global push towards net zero emissions). None of this research details the interorganizational domain of TCP itself. An exploration of the interorganizational processes that drive the Climate Pledge and its signatories will fill a gap in the literature while contributing the body of research on the effort to mitigate climate change.

Potential Beneficiaries of this Research

A transorganizational development case study of TCP benefits multiple stakeholders. A first group that benefits from a TD study of TCP is the body of academic research. Scholars benefit from this study in that the research details the inner workings of the second-largest transorganizational effort to reduce the effects of climate change, second only to the Paris Agreement. Considering the limited research on conveners applied to the battle against climate change, this study enhances academia's understanding of how conveners might facilitate tackling this specific wicked problem. Further, this research parallels studies of how the member nations of the Paris Agreement work together, comparing the collaboration of the public sector governments with the

collaborative efforts of private sector corporations. Last, this research breaks new ground in academia researching TD, as TCP represents one of the largest-scale efforts at interorganizational collaboration.

In addition to academia, practitioners in the TD profession are beneficiaries of this research. There are few "wicked problems" more "wicked" than climate change; however, a study demonstrating how TCP members work together should yield transferable best-practices and areas of opportunity for other large-scale, complex, global issues. A secondary group of professionals consulting for and supporting multinational corporations can benefit from this research as well; the practices and processes Climate Pledge members utilize to collaborate may transfer to the collaboration of different business units and functions of a large-scale, global enterprise.

Last, this author hopes that this in-depth case study of Amazon's role as the convener of TCP will benefit the Amazon employees responsible for its contribution to TCP. For the duration of this document, Amazon's team of employees and contractors responsible for its contribution will be referred to as "Amazon's TCP organization." Findings from the interviews conducted with these employees, when compared to the relevant scholarly literature described above, will yield valuable, practical insights and actionable recommendations.

Operational Definitions for Terms Used in This Research

To ensure coherence throughout this document, it is important to operationalize three terms regarding the subject of this case study. Three manifestations of TCP appear throughout this document: 1) TCP, a transorganizational system made up of Amazon, GO, 400+ signatories as of 2023, and other stakeholders; 2) the Climate Pledge (or the Pledge), the commitment of a signatory to measure carbon emissions and pursue carbon

net neutrality by 2040; and (c) Amazon's TCP organization, the subunit of Amazon responsible for TCP. These various terms will be used for the duration of this document to ensure clarity.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand Amazon's role as a convener in TCP achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040. Employing the case study methodology, the research will detail the history and evolution of Amazon's role with TCP and draw comparisons to the body of literature on convener best-practices.

Chapter 2 will cover the body of academic literature for research relevant to this study. Chapter 3 will address the methodology for the case study. Chapter 4 will present the findings from interviews with participants, as well as public and internal communications, and chapter 5 will conclude with the application of the case study findings to selected literature, implications for both research and practice, and limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Relevant Research

The goal of Chapter 2 is to detail the body of literature that informs this study. A review of the academic research relevant to Amazon's role as convener in TCP is organized into the eight major subjects: transorganizational systems, the convener role, referent organizations, collective impact, interorganizational collaboration, climate change, and carbon net zero.

Transorganizational Systems and Transorganizational Development

If one were to dig into the landscape of transorganizational development (TD), the bedrock of that landscape would be complexity and open systems theories, as presented by Emery and Trist's *The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments* (1965). The authors leverage an analogy of ecological turbulence to call into the question the assumptions that drove organizational strategy in their era. After defining the influential nature of a turbulent field, Emery and Trist describe a case study in which an organization failed to recognize the rapidly evolving nature of its environment, leading to that organization's decline. The authors prescribe the establishment of a common set of values as one mechanism to adapt to a turbulent field: a watershed innovation in its time that now is an absolute for organizations to mature. Emery and Trist's "turbulent field" underpinned TD in that it applied open systems theory to organizations, which in turn provided a lens through which to view wicked problems, the complex center of any transorganizational systems (TS).

Another of the seminal works in the TD field is Rittel and Webber's *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning* (1973). Their work differentiated "wicked" problems from "tame" problems: discrepancies between the current and could-be state with unclear goal

formulation, problem identification, problem definition, and planning processes. The authors cite signature characteristics of wicked problems, including the simultaneous discovery of problem and solution, the plurality of opinions and worldviews that challenge the problems and solutions identified, and the irreversible nature of implementing such solutions. Rittel and Webber challenge applied social scientists to unlock their minds from the classical closed systems theory, scientific method, and hypothesis testing of "tame" problems and approach their quandaries with a more open systemic view. While Rittel and Webber do not make clear a process to approach wicked problems, they do argue clearly that the process of the pre-industrial and modernist West will not solve the wicked problems of today's society (Rittel & Webber, 1973). As climate change and the race to carbon net zero meet the criteria of wicked problems, a Transorg analysis of the Climate Pledge rests firmly upon Rittel and Webber's academic foundation.

Another building block of TSs is Tom Cummings' (1984) *Transorganizational Development.* In the article, Cummings makes a case for an Integrative, holistic model of TS grounded in Interorganizational Relations and social problem solving. Included in this model is the description of a coordinating agency, referent organization, or linking-pin organization, three ways to describe an organization that coordinates effort and regulates TS behavioral norms.

Cummings (1984) differentiates TD from traditional OD, arguing that the unique nature of a TS necessitates a unique approach to its development. Cummings details the process of a TD practitioner (Identification, Convention, and Organization), as well as the roles and tasks required at each of these three steps.

A modern work that has contributed significantly to TD and TS academic discourse is Ainsworth and Feyerherm's (2016) *Higher order change: a transorganizational system diagnostic model*. Ainsworth and Feyerherm build upon the past work of Emery and Trist, Rittel and Webber, and Cummings to develop a diagnostic model for TSs. This model, adapted from Cummings' and Worley's (2019) "Comprehensive Model for Diagnosing Organizational Systems," provides the same level of diagnostic rigor to TSs previously applied to the individual, group, and organizational levels (Cummings and Worley, 2019, p. 89). This author applies Ainsworth and Feyerherm's model later to this case study's findings in chapter 5's *Second Order Themes: Contributions to Academic Discourse* section.

The Convener

At the crux of this study's research is the role of the convener in a TS. Extant research studies the actions required of a convening organization working inside a TS to solve a wicked problem. Ferraro et al.'s (2015) literary review profiles and analyzes the requirements of wicked problems and defines the action and effort required to address them. After equating wicked problems to Grand Challenges, the authors highlight three criteria that characterize them: Complex, Uncertain, and Evaluative. The researchers proceeded to utilize climate change, the backdrop for this study, as a concrete example of a complex, uncertain, and evaluative Grand Challenge. Finally, the researchers synthesize literature around "Robust Action Strategies" important to tackling Grand Challenges into a three-fold model: "participatory architecture," "multivocal inscription," and "distributed experimentation" (Ferraro et al., 2015, p. 373). Between Ferraro et al. situating Grand Challenges within the very domain of this study's research and their contribution of a

model for Robust Action, there exists a particular relatability between the researchers' work and this case study.

While Ferraro et al.'s research describes the work of a convener in a TS system yet does not specifically name the role, Alexander's (2020) *Leading Collective Action to Address Wicked Problems* is explicit in studying the convener and builds upon Ferraro et al.'s model. Alexander integrates previous research on the subject while analyzing a convener addressing another wicked problem - health care cost and quality in the United States. Alexander describes the subject organization's context, profile, and actions as it constructed a Health Information Exchange (HIE). This HIE connected private and public sector stakeholders together to increase healthcare quality while creating efficiencies in healthcare coordination. Further, Alexander's work validated and extended upon Ferraro et al.'s model of robust action. Alexander's research not only provided a concrete example of the three steps Ferraro et al. identified, but also added two more practices: "operational resource development and role adjustment" (Alexander, 2020, p. 453).

An additional case study contributing to the body of research on conveners is Dorado and Vaz's (2003) *Conveners as Champions of Collaboration in the Public Sector: A Case from South Africa*. Dorado and Vaz acknowledge research preceding their own on the qualities of an effective convener but identify a gap in research depicting the specific strategies that conveners employed. To close this research gap, Dorado and Vaz analyze a convener in the South African public sector against the strategies employed by "project champions." The researchers compare project champions, which provided coordinating energy to complex intra-organizational projects, to their case's convener facilitating inter-organizational collaboration. Dorado and Vaz delineate multiple strategies attributed to project champions that their convener subject employed, including

positional authority inside the organizations involved, raising awareness and advocating for the project and the need to collaborate, and the use of several influence tactics commonly ascribed to project champions (Dorado and Vaz, 2003). As the effectiveness of organization development strategies are measured against TSs, Dorado and Vaz assess the success of intra-organizational strategies of project champions against a convener in a TS.

One of the grounding works of Dorado and Vaz's article described above is Kalegaonkar and Brown's (2000) *Intersectoral Cooperation: Lessons for Practice.* This document from the Institute for Development Research utilizes case studies and lessons learned from the agency USAID's work in intersectoral cooperation. Kalegaonkar and Brown describe intersectoral cooperation (interorganizational collaboration between organizations in public, private, and nonprofit sectors) and then highlight the importance of identifying an effective convener to start intersectoral cooperation. Included in Kalegaonkar and Brown's treatment of the convener is a compelling definition of a convener: "…an important catalytic agent in all these situations, bringing unaware, unsure or skeptical actors to the table to explore the possibilities of cooperation" (Kalegaonkar and Brown, 2000, p. 9). This definition operationalizes the term.

Another work defining strategies conveners employed overlays paradox meta-theory onto convener strategies and tactics. The authors survey convener literature and overlay Lewis and Smith's paradox theory onto their case study. Their resulting analysis recasts a convener's work as navigating paradoxical tensions throughout their work in a TS or interorganizational system instead of overcoming problems for the system. This article from van Hille et al. identifies two paradoxes ("Leader-Facilitator" and "Neutrality-Stakeholder") encountered by its convener and three tactics the convener

utilizes to navigate those paradoxes ("selection, vacillation, and balancing") (van Hille et al., 2019).

An additional contribution to the convener body of research is Sedgwick et al.'s (2022) *Community Foundations as Network Conveners: Structuring Collective Agency for Child Education and Development System Impact*. Sedgwick et al. assess the effectiveness of a community foundation assuming a convener role. The researchers connect two additional ideas to convener research: purpose-oriented networks ("at least three autonomous organizations working collectively to address an issue") and anchor institutions ("institutions that are connected to an area or city and have built an identity tied to the neighborhood and city"). This article also provides an additional operational definition of the term convener to the body of research: "Conveners champion the collaborative effort and assume most of the coordinating burden, as well as 'shape the space for solutions'" (Sedgwick et al., 2022, p. 270).

Sedgwick et al. utilized a mixed-methods approach to measure effectiveness of their convener subject. In addition to qualitative action research and interview methodologies, the research team developed codified frequency charts for convener tactics, including: activating, framing, mobilizing, and synthesizing" and constructed organizational network analyses before and after the convener's intervention (Sedwick et al., 2022).

Referent Organization

A study of the role of the convener would be incomplete without considering other naming conventions for organizational roles in interorganizational and transorganizational systems sometimes conflated with the convener role. One such moniker is the referent organization (RO). The term referent organization is attributed to

Trist, one of the forefathers of the Causal Environment Type IV Turbulent Field

conducive to TD described earlier in this review. Described as a central organization to

which the member organizations of a grand challenge are linked (Trist, 1977, 1983), Trist

attributes the operationalization of the term to the notion of a reference group, or "a group

toward whose interests, attitudes, and values the individual is oriented" ("Reference

Group," 2023). In the same way that an individual projects authority or power onto a

reference group, so too do organizations in an interorganizational field domain (called

Constituent Organizations in Trist's treatment of ROs) project power onto an RO. This

projection of power can occur both explicitly through governance systems and implicitly

through the phenomenon of referent power described below.

Situated around the concept of projecting power onto ROs is French and Raven's

(1957) seminal work on Social Power Theory. One of five sources of power that have

become part of the underpinning of leadership and management practice, referent power

stems from an individual's or groups' identification with, or desire to identify with, the

individual or group from whom power is exerted. French and Raven further depict

referent power as connected to an individual's or group's experience with ambiguity: in

the midst of a "lack of clear structure" that "may be threatening" to an individual or

group, the "agreement of his beliefs" with the source of Referent Power provides "added

security through increased identification with" that source of power (French and Raven,

1957, p. 155). While French and Raven's treatment of referent power is directed to the

individual and group levels, this concept is situated within RO discourse. Considering the

salience of the term within the domain of organizational behavior and its semantic

similarity to ROs, it is worthwhile to understand referent power's academic body of

work.

The RO serves three primary functions: Regulation (described as "establishing ground rules and maintaining basic values"), Appreciation (."..of emergent trends and issues," and Infrastructure Support ("resource, information, special projects, etc.") (Trist, 1983). Trist continues to identify specific attributes (voluntary vs mandated and emergent vs established) of ROs and different types of ROs (Constituent, Representative, Single, and Multiple).

A last salient component of Trist's treatise on ROs links ROs and "interorganizational domains…functional social systems that occupy a position in social space between the society as a whole and the single organization" (Trist, 1983, p. 270). Interorganizational domains directly compare to TSs, a comparison validated by the author's connection of interorganizational domains to the same 'grand challenges' or 'wicked problems' that TSs exist to solve. As this research's focus is on Amazon's role as convener within a TS, this component of Trist's research situates ROs as a key feature of surrounding Amazon's role as convener in TCP TS. ROs come to inhabit TSs in one of two ways: either the RO existed at the time of the TS' convention, or the RO is created by the TS to serve the system. Additionally, TSs exist that do not have an RO (Trist, 1983).

While Trist's (1977, 1983) works founded the term "referent organization" and is frequently cited, the body of research continues to evolve the concept. For example, DuBow et al.'s (2018) research on how backbone organizations influence the collective impact change methodology. Like ROs in TSs, collective impact networks can choose to include or not include a backbone organization to "shoulder a considerable portion of the *operational* (emphasis in original) burden of collective impact." The results of DuBow et al.'s research identifies five best-practices for effective backbone facilitation. The authors

interviewed participants in a particular collective impact initiative and then used the meta-themes that emerged to provide actionable recommendations. These five meta-themes included: "Convenings, Accountability, National Visibility, Top Leader Involvement, and Coaching," which DuBow et al. distilled and generalized into four practices for all collective impact initiatives: "convene participants in person, in neutral setting," "coach each participating organization, helping participants to adapt the collective impact work to their own environments and needs," "provide a 'respectful' structure of accountability," and "add legitimacy to the processes of collaboration" through the backbone organization's reputation and prestige (DuBow et al., 2018, pp. 31-32).

Considering the role of convener is the narrow focus of this case study, this author's interest was drawn to DuBow et al.'s insights on their research target's effective convening capabilities. The backbone organization that DuBow et al. researched facilitated regular meetings and roundtables. The authors' interview data indicates that those gatherings drove favorable responses from participating organizations' sense of trust in the Collective impact initiative and collaboration across sectors and organizations. Further, the backbone organizations' convening facilitated Strategic Learning, data-driven engagement and sharing of lessons learned between Collective impact participants, which is itself an important component of the most current Collective impact model for change. While TCP's extant documentation does not explicitly indicate the use of the Collective impact model, DuBow et al.'s treatise on backbone organizations facilitating change adds to the body of knowledge that informs this study of Amazon's role with TCP.

Another more modern study of ROs is Brès et al.'s (2018) *Pluralism in Organizations: Learning from Unconventional Forms of Organizations*. Designed as an aggregated literature review to challenge conventional management's bureaucratic mental map of organizations, Brès et al. exacted meta-themes from hundreds of studies on several organization types. One such organization type the authors studied is the RO. The authors built heavily on the Trist (1977) article detailed above; however, their thematic aggregation and summary yielded insights on the challenges that RO's face. For example, Brès et al. (2018) synthesized various works on RO to recognize how the complexity and turbulence of certain inter-organizational domains can hinder RO's impact on the aims of a TS. Further, the authors observed the reduced level of consensus in decision-making that may result when employing a RO.

A last article informing the RO body of research for this case study is itself a case study of an RO. Lee's (2019) *Leadership in Transorganizational Systems: Understanding the Referent Function* utilizes a Los Angeles-area referent organization to identify effective practices for fulfilling the functions of an RO. The author emphasizes relationship management as a central theme that surfaced in qualitative interview research: not only managing the RO's relationships with constituent organizations, but also the management of the relationships between constituent organizations. Further, Lee observed a frequency in qualitative responses regarding "addressing timelines; pacing, mapping, and tracking resources; and collecting and making sense of information or intelligence" (p. 30). Last, Lee validates the study's meta-themes against the RO functions that Trist identified in his seminal work on ROs mentioned at the outset of this section.

Collective Impact

The academic literature surrounding TSs, conveners, and ROs often mentions a relatively modern methodology for collaborative social change: collective impact. The body of collective impact work points to Kania and Kramer's (2011) *Collective Impact* article as the impetus for the term's operationalization and the increase in the model's popularity (Weaver, 2014). Collective impact, as defined by Kania and Kramer, is a "commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem" (Kania and Kramer, 2011, p. 36). When compared to the definition of a TS, it becomes clear that collective impact is a subcategory of TSs. Like a TS, organizations join together to solve a problem that the participants' individual, isolated impacts will not solve alone. Where TS serves as a more expansive term is in the use of the phrases "different sectors" and "social problem." While TSs can bring stakeholders together from public, for profit, and nonprofit sectors, it is not exclusively the case. For example, the signatories of TCP include for profit and nonprofit organizations, but public institutions are intentionally not actively included among the list of signatories. Further, while many TSs tackle a social initiative as their 'Grand Challenge', 'Mess', or 'wicked problem', it need not be the case. Once again, TCP and its primary focus exemplifies a TS that may not exactly fit collective impact's operational definition: tackling climate change and carbon net zero currently classifies more as an ecological problem and less of a social initiative. With this definition and thought exercise with TCP, it becomes clear that collective impact networks are TSs, but not all TSs fit the definition of collective impact. However, given that TCP's grand challenge holds the complexity and magnitude that requires a TS and that collective impact is one type of TS, it bears consideration for the literary context into which this study is situated.

Kania and Kramer (2011) go on to describe the breeding ground, success conditions, and capital requirements for collective impact networks. The authors contrast technical problems, which are well-defined and often do not require the cross-sector collaboration that collective impact implies, and adaptive problems, described as "complex… [for which] the answer is not known…no single entity has the resources or authority to bring about the necessary change" (p. 39). Reminiscent of the wicked problems, grand challenges, and turbulent environments that necessitate a TS, adaptive problems invite collective impact in the social problem-solving domain. Additional scholarly literature not only points out Kania and Kramer's (2011) conditions for successful collective impact but "preconditions" as well: "influential leaders, a sense of urgency for the issue, and adequate resources" (Weaver, 2014, p. 12).

Success conditions for collective impact that Kania and Kramer (2011) identify include "a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations" (p. 39). The latter success condition interplays with the treatment of ROs above. Kania and Kramer argue that the administrative and coordinative work that adaptive problems and their respective collective impact initiatives require necessitates an organization with the capabilities to serve as that administrative spine. A last consideration in the authors' foundational work on this subject is the importance of funding collective impact initiatives. Kania and Kramer implore collective impact network participants and their funders to shift their mindsets from funding a particular solution to funding the collaborative effort itself.

Since the Kania and Kramer (2011) article described above accelerated the body of literature and practice of collective impact, academic discourse has advanced considerably on the subject. Additional considerations for collective impact include

shifting attitudes and habits in order to effectively execute and sustain the practice (Kania et al., 2014), systems of evaluation that support effective collective impact networks (Parkhurst & Preskill, 2014), and the critiques and limitations of the collective impact model (Smart, 2017; Weaver, 2014).

Kania et al.'s (2014) extension of the collective impact narrative engages the subject of mindset: what specific attitudes about work must change to execute the model for solving social problems effectively. The authors identify three primary foci for workplace habits: (a) combining cross-sectoral diversity and individuals who are experienced living with the issue to ensure a cognitively diverse and holistic approach, (b) the importance of trusting relationships, an aligned inter-organizational structure, and sharing recognition for the network's impact on the shared problem, and (c) balance the use of technical and adaptive problem solving skills to address the tactical and complex, strategic elements of the problem and "look for silver buckshot instead of the silver bullet" (p. 3). This final consideration invites collective impact constituent organizations to "recognize that success comes from the combination of many interventions" as opposed to a singular, all-encompassing, 'perfect' solution (p. 5).

Given the difference between technical and adaptive problems described above, collective impact research extends throughout the entire life cycle of a collective impact change, including a collective impact initiative's evaluation. Recent research explores whether a conventional evaluation process that functions for technical problems is appropriate for evaluating the more adaptive, complex, and multi-faceted collective impact approach. Parkhurst and Preskill's (2014) "Learning in Action: Evaluating Collective Impact" explores this question and offers an alternative model for evaluation. The authors sketch a more holistic, systems-based evaluation model that considers the

adaptive problem's context and the process of igniting change in its entirety. Parkhurst and Preskill (2014) invite the reader to evaluate early and often, integrating an evaluative workstream into the collective impact initiative that drives adaptation and continuous improvement. Last, the authors identify three forms of collective impact evaluation based upon the maturity of the initiative using the stages of developmental evaluation, which asks, "What needs to happen?" during the exploratory phase; formative evaluation, which asks, "How well is it working?" during the initiative's growth and continuous improvement; and summative evaluation, which asks "What difference did it make?" once the initiative reaches stability and maturity.

A final consideration for this portion of the study's relevant research is the critiques and limitations of collective impact. Considering the popularity of the change methodology since its introduction in 2011, it is worthwhile to consider the potential costs of collective impact and use cases for which it may be less effective (Smart, 2017; Weaver, 2014). Some scholars and practitioners critique the model as a rebranding of existing collaborative change methodologies and principles. Others, considering the collective impact model has existed for 12 years at the time of writing and is untested, wonder if collective impact will indeed provide a collective impact for the problems it attempts to solve. Weaver (2014) points out that collective impact's wave of popularity has rendered it the model of choice for many practitioners in the social problem-solving domain, regardless if the initiative and its stakeholders can meet the pre-conditions or conditions the model requires. Last, critical research invites the topic of equity into the collective impact dialogue. The "causes of many social issues that collective impact projects seek to address are rooted in structural inequities," and yet the topic is "[omitted] from the five conditions" of collective impact (Smart, 2017, p. 6). Critical scholarly

research attempts to integrate diversity and equity into the change methodology as a means to protect populations from inequitable treatment in the midst of solving these already inequitable, complex challenges.

Interorganizational Collaboration

As Cummings (1984) explained, the field of interorganizational relations provided one of two streams of thought that converged into the river that is TS. Along with Social Problem Solving, interorganizational relations provides insight into the peculiarities of interaction between organizations working together to solve a common problem. One corollary to interorganizational relations is Interorganizational Collaboration (IC), an emerging field defined as "people from different organizations com[ing] together for a time-constrained mission that requires their joint efforts" (Woo, 2021, p. 846). A study of Amazon's role as convener in TCP calls for a review of the research detailing how organizations collaborate together.

One of the first prevalent bodies of research in the IC field considers the motivation for interorganizational collaboration. Why do disparate organizations, with their own problems to solve and customers to serve, feel compelled to work together? Austin and Seitandi (2012) approach IC motivation from a quantitative lens, constructing four value-creation measures for collaboration between two organizations: the Value Creation Spectrum, Collaboration Stages, Partnering Processes, and Collaboration Outcomes. Further, Austin and Seitandi operationally defined four types of IC value: Associational, Transferred, Interactional, and Synergistic.

Le Pennec and Raufflet (2018) expounded upon Austin and Seitandi's four measures, known collectively as the Collaboration Value Creation Framework. The researchers applied Austin and Seitandi's Collaboration Value Creation Framework to a

6-year case study as a means to quantify the value generated from their subjects'
collaborative relationship. Le Pennec and Raufflet extended Austin and Seitandi's
framework as well, contending that these value types demonstrated a sequential pattern
and that each value type achieved "specific examples of learning in an inter-
organizational partnership" (Le Pennec & Raufflet, 2018, p. 831). It is certainly true that
the network of Climate Pledge signatories is much larger and more complex than Le
Pennec and Raufflet's pair of collaborating subjects. However, Cummings' reference to
Interorganizational Relations (and IC as corollary) as an underpinning component of TSs
suggests that the principles underpinning the Collaboration Value Creation Framework
apply to Amazon's collaborative interactions with other TCP signatories.

Another work important to the body of IC knowledge is Gray and Stites' (2013)
IC literature review *Sustainability through partnerships: Capitalizing on Collaboration.*
In this synthesis of IC research, Gray and Stites [as referenced in Le Pennec and Raufflet
(2018)] identified four orientations for IC motivation (legitimacy-oriented, competency-
oriented, resource-oriented, and society-oriented) and three key considerations for
collaborating organizations regarding value-creation: selecting the right partnership type,
selecting the right partner type, and careful management of the partnership process. These
descriptive motives and prescriptive considerations inform a convener recruiting
additional organizations to a TS or selecting among existing TS members to collaborate
more or less robustly.

In addition to the literature reviews and prescriptive works described above, the
IC body of knowledge consists of a number of case studies. One such 2020 case study
from Erikson and Larsson investigates the effectiveness of "The Swedish Platform Civil
Society against Human Trafficking," a network of nonprofit organizations that defines its

activity as "combating human trafficking and restoring the dignity of victims of trafficking and further to work to strengthen human rights for victims" (Plattformen Mot Människohandel, 2022, p. 193). Erikson and Larsson's subject engages a wicked problem (Human Trafficking) through a network of multiple organizations, analogous to the wicked problem and subject of this work: climate change and TCP. The authors' findings positively evaluated the platform's effectiveness at accomplishing its self-proclaimed mission, highlighting the capacity of the platform's member organizations to flex to the needs of the human trafficking victims that it serves. While the signatories of TCP are for-profit businesses and not civil society organizations singularly focused on battling climate change, Erikson and Larsson's conclusions about collaborative effectiveness in tackling a wicked problem are applicable to this study.

Another IC case study details organizations' willingness to share information during a crisis situation. Solansky and Beck assessed delegates from various organizations involved in a cyber terrorism scenario exercise. The authors determined a direct correlation between delegates' willingness to share information with peers and willingness to offer assistance to or seek assistance from peers. Given the body of research demonstrating the importance of interorganizational collaboration to solve wicked problems (cyber terrorism certainly being one such problem), this study identifies a lead indicator for IC and, as the authors would describe it, "interorganizational integrative action" (Solansky and Beck, 2021, p. 118).

Climate Change

While the majority of the relevant research situating this case study deals with organizational behavior, a working knowledge of the transorganizational system's context is also key. Climate change is a vast topic that deserves its own literary review;

however, this author will limit the dialogue to basic details about climate change and a few key considerations that contextualize TCP. The basic impacts of climate change have entered the global vernacular in the last decade: changes in rainfall, increased frequency and intensity of severe weather events, changes to ecosystems, and increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Additional consequences to climate change include increased health risk for vulnerable populations worldwide and increases in oceans' acidity and volume levels (US EPA, 2023).

In addition to basic information about climate change itself, a working knowledge of the Paris Agreement is key to understanding TCP. The Paris Agreement, "adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015," aims to "hold 'the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels' and pursue efforts 'to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels'" (UN Framework for Climate Change, 2023, para. 2). Through gradually more aggressive five-year plans called "nationally determined contributions (NDCs)" and "long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies (LT-LEDS)," member parties work to diminish greenhouse gas emissions and move towards Carbon Net Neutrality by 2050 (UN Framework for Climate Change, 2023, para. 10-11). This latter element is particularly salient to this case study, as TCP's signatories promise to achieve this same feat ten years earlier, by 2040 (The Climate Pledge, 2023b).

A final climate change consideration for this case study is what transorganizational or interorganizational collaboration research exists on the subject. There is extant scholarly research about how different organizations might work collaboratively to solve this urgent, wicked problem. The UN's description of the Paris

Agreement's progress details a model for inter-country collaboration and support. A three-pronged financial, technological, and capacity-building model "reaffirms that developed countries should take the lead in providing …assistance to countries that are less endowed and more vulnerable" (UN Framework for Climate Change, 2023, para. 13). This model for inter-country support addresses assistance to developing countries for mitigating carbon emissions and for adapting to climate change. Gray and Stites' (2011) *In search of Integrative Logics: Reframing the Climate Change Debate* applies the notion of "BHAGS (Big Hairy Audacious Goals)" to the interorganizational and trans-national domain of tackling climate change. ."..because organizational members have multiple, conflicting goals, consensus is only achieved when there are overarching goals to which everyone can subscribe. Similarly, instead of arguing about specific means–ends relationships, actors in the transnational climate change debate need to set their sights on far-reaching goals they can all support" (Gray and Stites, 2011, p. 87).

Additional relevant research includes Lopes de Sousa Jabbour et al.'s (2019) *The interplay between stakeholders, resources and capabilities in climate change strategy: converting barriers into cooperation*. This article applies "stakeholder theory," the "natural resource-based view," and "multi-stakeholder partnerships" to the inter-organizational domain of Brazil's climate change strategy. Lopes de Sousa Jabbour et al. conduct research as a means to understand how to manage drivers for and barriers to achieving Brazil's carbon emissions goals. The "mechanisms of response" that the authors identified are the meta-themes of interviewees of large Brazilian companies' attempts to overcome barriers and capitalize upon drivers of lower carbon emissions. Notably, these companies assessed "stakeholders' potential to create barriers" and "perception of the extent to which stakeholders are willing to cooperate" when choosing

which mechanisms to employ (Lopes de Sousa Jabbour et al., 2019). While this study is narrowly focused upon supporting one country's race to carbon net neutrality, these insights on stakeholder assessment and mechanisms to manage barriers and drivers to adoption apply are relevant to this research into transorganizational behavior in the same domain.

A final article informing the inter-organizational domain of climate change analyzes how the concept of collaborative governance between municipal institutions can generate more effective outcomes for climate change adaptation. Kalesnikaite's (2019) *Keeping Cities Afloat: Climate Change Adaptation and Collaborative Governance at the Local Level* identified the three most frequent collaborative activities between northeastern municipal governments facing sea level rise ("sharing information on best practices," "joint advocacy to higher levels of government," and "joint program development") and established a positive correlation between collaborative activity and outcomes for municipalities collaborating with municipalities and with businesses (Kalesnikaite, 2019, p. 875). This study contextualizes Amazon's role as convener in TCP within the theme of collaborative governance and in collaborative action with municipal bodies.

Carbon Net Zero

In addition to climate change, the carbon net zero movement is also bound up in the situational context of TCP and this TD case study. Three relevant meta-themes in the race to carbon net neutrality, the aim of TCP, are carbon reduction, carbon offsets, and carbon trading.

Carbon reduction is categorized into three different 'scopes' of carbon emissions. Scope 1 emissions are "direct greenhouse (GHG) emissions that occur from sources that

are controlled or owned by an organization"; Scope 2 are "indirect GHG emissions associated with the purchase of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling"; Scope 3 are "Upstream" or "Downstream" GHG emissions, or "indirect emissions resulting from value chain activities" (Batia et al., 2011, p. 4; The Climate Pledge, 2023b; US EPA, 2023, para. 1).

TCP indicates a few practices that it recommends its signatories choose to mitigate carbon emissions in each of these three scopes: "energy and materials efficiency, renewable energy generation, and other low-carbon technologies to reduce their direct and indirect footprints" (The Climate Pledge, 2023b). A benchmark for Carbon Reduction best practices and standards is the *Greenhouse Gas Protocols*, jointly authored by the World Resources Institute and World Business Council for Sustainable Development. In this seminal document, the World Resources Institute and World Business Council for Sustainable Development recommend approaching carbon reductions much like any corporate strategy: identifying business goals for reducing emissions, establishing an emissions baseline year from which to measure progress, developing robust data collection and management systems, and utilizing quality assurance and reporting to evaluate against business and emissions targets (Batia et al., 2011)

In addition to the reduction of carbon emissions, carbon offsets are an essential component of carbon net neutrality. TCP, the Paris Agreement, and the body of research in the carbon emissions domain recognize that the race to carbon net zero will not be won with reductions alone. TCP's public standards on its website include in its definition of net-zero carbon emissions "neutralizing any remaining emissions with additional, quantifiable, real, permanent, and socially beneficial offsets" (The Climate Pledge,

2023b). Included in definition is ensuring that offset practices are not simply a means to reaching net-zero targets but also are beneficial to the ecological and social contexts in which they are conducted.

The third and final element of pursuing carbon net zero is the practice of carbon credits, also known as carbon trading or emissions trading. The purchase and sale of carbon credits occurs between countries through Removal Units (RMUs), Emission Reduction Units (ERUs), and Certified Emission Reductions (CERs) (UN Framework for Climate Change, 2023). In the case of RMUs, ERUs, and CERs, countries with carbon emissions capacity that exceeds their designated amount for a given year can commoditize a carbon removal initiative and sell it to another country. This practice facilitates the aforementioned Paris Agreement recommendations to developed countries to support more vulnerable and developing countries in their races to carbon net zero.

Similar to RMUs, ERUs, and CERs, carbon credits are bought and sold between businesses and the renewable electricity industry through the purchase and sale of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs). RECs represent one megawatt of renewable electricity outside of a business's value chain that the business purchases and can claim as an offset (US EPA, 2018). Both carbon credit practices serve to counter-balance emissions that countries and businesses expend that cannot yet or cannot ever be reduced. Additionally, both practices have generated entire industries around the purchase and sale of carbon credits.

An institution or organization's carbon emissions reduced through emissions reduction practices, together with the sum of carbon offsets and carbon credits, yield a net carbon emissions figure that TCP and Paris Agreement signatories aim to bring down to zero.

A final consideration in recent literature connected to both carbon net zero, TCP, and TD is the Race to Zero initiative. Like the TCP TS, Race to Zero is "a global campaign backed by the United Nations (UN) that rallies non-state actors—including companies, cities, regions, and financial and educational institutions—to take rigorous and immediate action to halve global emissions by 2030 and deliver a healthier net zero carbon world [by 2050]" (Sevil et al., 2022, p. 779). Sevil et al.'s (2022) article not only details Race to Zero but also three sources of uncertainty ("Empirical," "Interdependence," and "Ethical") that the TS faces and the transorganizational elements that support the system overcoming those sources. As another large TS tackling the wicked problem of climate change simultaneous to TCP, Sevil et al.'s research is highly relevant to this case study's treatment of Amazon's role as convener.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research was to understand how Amazon's role as convener has impacted TCP, a transorganizational system (TS) of corporations committed to pursue the goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2040. A literature review of peer-reviewed research yielded a limited number of case studies describing the convener role in TSs. A case study detailing Amazon's convening role in this 400+ member transorganizational system, solving for the wicked problem that is climate change, would support the academic research in this field. Further, as this author is an Amazon employee in a different, unrelated business unit at the time of writing, there is an intrinsic interest to provide practical recommendations to Amazon's TCP senior leadership. By holding up a robust literature review of the convener role, TD, and referent organizations (ROs) to themes that emerge from qualitative research, this author aspired to determine actionable recommendations for best-practices beneficial to Amazon's TCP organization and the battle against climate change. The research addresses such best-practice recommendations and possible study limitations as a result of the author's affinity with the research subject in Chapter 5.

Research Questions

This case study examined a central research question and several sub questions that contextualized the central question. The central question was: How did Amazon's role as a convener impact the TCP, as experienced by stakeholders? The sub-questions were:

1. What are Amazon's relationships with TS partners?

2. Have there been changes over time in Amazon's role? If so, what are they?

3. What do participants in TCP see for the future focus?

4. What are implications for practice (post-interview and informed by academic literature)?

Case Study Design

Employing the case study methodology, the research detailed the history and evolution of the Climate Pledge as it pertains to Amazon's transorganizational role as Convener. Creswell and Creswell's *Research Designs* (2020) defines case studies as "an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals…bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time." Creswell's definition breaks the case study research design into four distinct parts: "in-depth analysis of a case," time and activity boundaries, multiple means of data collection, and "sustained period of time" (Creswell and Creswell, 2020, p. 32). The following paragraphs describe how this study's design meets these four criteria below.

In-Depth Analysis of a Case

This study delves deeply into Amazon's role as Convener of TCP. As a result, not only is TCP program the field of view for the study, the organization of Amazon employees supporting TCP become an even more narrow antecedent. The research design shapes the interview protocol and supplementary data sources to gain insights and themes specific to this lens and excludes additional subject matter (e.g. additional information about TCP, information about other TCP signatories and stakeholders, or details about

the larger Amazon Sustainability organization within which TCP organizational sub-unit resides).

Time and Activity Boundaries

The research design places a specific time boundary around the data collection due to TCP's relatively recent founding. Founded in 2019, the Pledge's four-year life-span thus far (at time of writing) provides a controlled time context to situate the research. Similarly, the topic "Amazon's role as Convener of TCP" narrows the lens of research pertaining to activity. While TCP comprises a worthwhile source of information for additional research, this study focuses narrowly upon one co-founder and signatory (Amazon's) role in TCP's Convention.

Multiple Means of Data Collection

While this study does not capture both qualitative and quantitative data, it does yield themes and insights from various qualitative data sources. In addition to qualitative interview data captured from Amazon employees that work for the TCP team, the research includes various relevant forms of media that yield insights into Central Research Question. The primary investigator identified some of these data sources prior to conducting interviews, while others emerged from Amazon TCP employees' recommendations during the interviews. Please see the 'Data Sources' section below for more granular details about this additional media.

Sustained Period of Time

This final criterion is the only one of the four moderately achieved by the study design. Creswell and Creswell (2020) do not specify or prescribe how long a "sustained period of time" should be. However, this author imagines that the three-month interview timeframe established in the 'Chronology of Events' above likely does not qualify for the

"sustained period" described. In order to accommodate for this study limitation, the research design invites the research subjects to reflect on the change over time of Amazon's role with TCP. This component of the Interview Protocol captures each participant's subjective experience of change and continuity during TCP's four-year span. The subjects' perspectives inform a period of time that Creswell might consider sustained pertinent to the Research Question.

Participants

Inclusion criteria for this study included Amazon full-time employees employed to support TCP. Anyone not described in the inclusion criteria were excluded from this study. Amazon employees that are contracted by or work part-time for TCP were excluded from the study as well. Subjects were identified through Amazon's intranet directory, PhoneTool. This study did not involve non-English speakers and did not exclude participants based upon any protected characteristics.

Subjects learned about the research through a Sample Email to Interview Subject and through an introduction at the beginning of each interview. Subjects were recruited through an email (see Appendix A) introducing the primary investigator, research topic, and request for participation. Following this initial contact with a potential subject, follow-up and subsequent contact often occurred via Slack, a messaging application commonly used internally at Amazon. Upon participants' acceptance of an audiovisual interview, an email calendar invitation (see Appendix B) provided a link to the Informed Consent document and Zoom link, which was used for the participant interviews. If the participant instead accepted an interview via asynchronous written response, an email with the interview protocol was sent via email with a link to the Informed Consent document (see Appendix C).

Care of Human Subjects and Ethical Considerations

While this research study posed little to no potential harm to its human subject participants, this author observed the following considerations: Potential Benefits, Potential Risks and Risk Mitigation Strategies, Alternative Procedures, and Participant Response and Data Confidentiality, and Informed Consent. Consent was obtained through a Qualtrics electronic survey, including a standard informed consent form. The consent form is in Appendix D.

Research Protocol

The research unfolded in the following sequence of events and approximate time frames of the research study:

1. Primary Investigator recruited and contacted interview participants sometime between March and May 2023.

2. Primary Investigator conducted one-time, 30-90 minute online audiovisual interviews with Amazon employees supporting TCP. These interviews occurred sometime between March and June 2023.

3. Primary Investigator analyzed interview data independently to draw thematic conclusions about the research topic.

4. Primary Investigator compared thematic conclusions to academic literature detailing best practices for the Convener role.

5. Primary Investigator conducted one 30- to 60-minute meeting to provide recommendations for best practices to Amazon employees employed to support TCP.

6. Primary Investigator published thesis with results and conclusions in July 2023.

The following sections outlined the interview protocol and additional data sources. Procedures for data analysis are then outlined.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol (see [Appendix E](#)) for Amazon employees working for the TCP team included questions engineered to answer the study's sub-questions (with the exception of the 'implications for practice' section), as well as to stimulate dialogue and probe for key insights arising from those questions. The protocol was organized into three parts: (a) experience working with GO and other TCP signatories, (b) Amazon's role in TCP over time, and (c) envisioning the future of TCP and Amazon's role in it.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the subjective experience and specific job role of each participant to shape the sequence of questions and generate probing questions not explicitly listed in the protocol. Each interviewee received a blank copy of the questions prior to their interview to guide and stimulate their responses. Further, as this author provided research participants an alternative to audiovisual interview via email response, the interview protocol is written to either be utilized by the interviewer or to guide the interviewee asynchronously.

Data Sources

Data were captured through (a) interviews of Amazon employees hired to support TCP, (b) TCP-related internal documents, and (c) media demonstrating Amazon's transorganizational engagement and collaboration with GO and other TCP signatories. These documents and media included:

1. TCP public-facing website.
2. TCP's press release regarding Passport, a social media network authored by Amazon for TCP Signatories.

3. TCP's publicized Future Forward series of videos highlighting signatories' decarbonization efforts and joint-signatory collaborations.

4. TCP's internally facing monthly newsletter distributed to signatories, some Amazon employees, and other stakeholders.

5. TCP stories, which are written and illustrated articles spotlighting signatories' decarbonization efforts, joint-signatory collaborations, and other topics related to TCP partners.

6. TCP's social media posts on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram.

Analysis Methodology

The data analysis methodology for this case study was adapted from Gioia et al.'s (2012) grounded theory analysis methodology and Yin's (2018) principles for case study data analysis. Gioia et al.'s (2012) qualitative analysis approach was used to examine the data. The analysis methodology begins with raw interview data and progresses through First Order Concepts, an analysis using informant-centric terms and codes, and then was passed into Second Order Themes, "[an analysis] using researcher-centric concepts, themes, and dimensions" (p. 18). Gioia et al.'s methodology also included aggregate dimensions, researcher-centric meta-themes distilled from synthesized Second Order Themes. In addition to common qualitative analysis metrics of frequency and intensity, aggregate dimensions were highlighted, wherein previous theoretical antecedents with a new, surprising application of an existing theoretical antecedent were identified. This latter consideration derives from Gioia et al.'s approach to grounded theory.

While grounded theory and case study research designs contrast in some ways, their similarities as qualitative research methodologies permit an adaptation of Gioia et al.'s work to this study. Both designs study a particular event or process and utilize

informant-centric views of the study's participants as data from which to draw data-driven conclusions. While Case Studies do not conventionally develop grounded theory's "general, abstract theory…grounded in the views of participants," its subjects' responses shape the direction of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2020, p. 31). For this reason, Gioia et al.'s (2012) analysis was adapted as follows for the present study:

1. Raw data derived from audiovisual interviews, written interviews, and both public-facing and internal TCP media sources.

2. Second-order themes synthesizing first-order concepts and the so-called voice of the literature.

3. Contributions to research for academia and actionable recommendations for best-practice implementation for the case study subject in lieu of aggregate dimensions.

Identification of aggregate dimensions, meaning researcher-centric meta-themes distilled from synthesized Second Order Themes (Gioia et al., 2012) due to the narrow focus of this case study. Gioia et al.'s grounded theory approach also does not explicitly include multimedia sources and subject interviews. This author integrated quotations and basic quantitative data from these media sources into the First Order Concepts that surfaced from the interview data.

Yin's (2018) case study analysis strategies and analysis techniques also were used in this study, including "relying on theoretical propositions, working your data from the 'ground up,' developing a case description, and examining rival explanations" (p. 163) and "pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis" (Yin, 2018, p. 164). Yin encourages researchers in this seminal work on case study research design to select one or more of the strategies and a selection

of the techniques above to add rigor to the "promising patterns, insights, or concepts" that emerge from the data. While this author chose Gioia et al.'s (2012) First Order Concepts and Second Order Themes to clearly differentiate between ground-up data and the so-called voice of the literature, Yin's (2018) guidance around 'ground-up' data analysis integrates with First Order Concepts and is considered in chapter 4. Further, as the theme of Change Over Time emerged as a key point of interest in the Research Methodology and during data collection, this research devotes a Second Order Theme from its findings to a change over time chronology adapted from Yin's Simple Time-Series analysis technique.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter serves to report the inductive analysis of data that surfaced in this

study and apply relevant literature to the data's meta-themes. As described in chapter 3,

Gioia et al.'s (2012) framework for data analysis was used to organize the findings that

emerged from this case study. First order concepts, or "informant-centric terms and

codes," and Second Order Themes, or "[an analysis] using researcher-centric concepts,

themes, and dimensions" are presented. These concepts and themes are represented in

this chapter by illustrative quotations from interviewees and qualitative and quantitative

data from public and internal communications.

First Order Concepts

The four First Order Concepts that emerged from the ground-up analysis of the

data are: Convening Inter-Organizational Relationship Dynamics, Passport and Aligned

Aspirations for Convening Strategy, A Transorganizational System Subject to

Environmental Pressure, and Amazon's New Capabilities as TCP Grows. Two of these

First Order Concepts—Convening Interorganizational Relationship Dynamics and

Amazon's New Capabilities as TCP Grows—include subsections for more coherence.

These four First Order Concepts were collated from audiovisual interviews, written

interviews, and relevant internal and public communications (see Table 1 and detailed in

sequence below.

Table 1

First Order Concepts Synthesized from Data

First Order Concept	Definition	Sample Data	Interviews (N = 6)	Website pages	Other
Convening Interorganizational Relationship Dynamics: Amazon, Global Optimism, Signatories, and Stakeholders	Interorganizational dynamics between different constituent members of TCP	"What I love about the pledge and the way that we've been set up is that we just have so many multiple avenues where signatories have an opportunity to…engage with each other."	6 (100%)	Stories, Time Tunnel	New and Noteworthy newsletter
Passport & Aligned Aspirations for Convening Strategy	TCP's new exclusive 'social network' for signatories and Amazon's aspiration for more organic interorganizational collaboration between signatories	"I think that Passport is probably one of our strongest ways that… we [Amazon's TCP organization] can get out of the middle and [signatories] can…move forward with each other…"	6 (100%)	Stories, Passport	New and noteworthy newsletter
A Transorg System Subject to Environmental Pressures	Participants adjusting to the challenges brought by the Pandemic and Tech Industry's economic correction	"…there was a lot of concern in the industry and also for us, having just co-founded The Climate Pledge, in what the Pandemic would do to progress on sustainability…"	4 (67%)		Public communications about reductions in force
Amazon's New Capabilities as TCP Grows	Participants' awareness of the Amazon TCP organization's capabilities and their importance to TCP's success	"[We are] a really unique team…a nonprofit within the company the way we operate…our own brand identity"	6 (100%)	Home, Stories, About	GLEC, Pathfinder for carbon emissions

Convening Interorganizational Relationship Dynamics: Amazon, Global Optimism,

Signatories, and Stakeholders

Various inter-organizational dynamics surfaced during the interviews with

Amazon employees on the TCP team. These dynamics are treated below and include

Amazon's relationship to GO, Amazon's relationship to other TCP Signatories,

Signatories' relationships to other Signatories, and Amazon's relationship to other TCP

Stakeholders.

Amazon's relationship to Global Optimism. The relationship between Amazon

and GO was a key point of interest in this study, as the theoretical foundation of the study

included research on conveners and ROs. As I studied the literature around both

transorganizational roles, I hypothesized that Amazon played the role of convener while

GO played the role of RO. As a result, several questions in the interview protocol sought

a description of the relational dynamic between the Co-Founders of TCP. Concepts that

emerged from those questions include the organizations' relationship during the early

foundation of the pledge, Amazon's and GO's division of roles, the ways in which this

relational dynamic has changed over time, and Amazonians' varied experience with GO.

Data emerged describing interviewees' subjective experience and historical

recollection of Amazon and GO at TCP's foundation in 2019. TCP employees recognized

the importance of GO's presence as co-Founder of the Pledge, due to GO leadership's

proven legitimacy in battling climate change. Interview data and research into GO's co-

founder, Christiana Figueres, indicated that she led the inter-organizational coalition that

wrote and ratified the Paris Agreement. Research participants acknowledged the clout

and influence that Ms. Figueres' accomplishment bore on TCP's legitimacy during the

Pledge's early years. One respondent explained, ."..having [GO] as co-founders of The

Climate Pledge is really valuable…so often, if we're including Christiana... the architect

of the Paris Agreement… that has a lot of weight." Related to the influence that GO held

during TCP's foundation due to Christina Figueres' previous accomplishment,

respondents also highlighted climate change subject matter expertise that GO provided to

Amazon and to TCP as a whole. Descriptions included a significant reliance on GO's

knowledge of climate change and Sustainability, as well as GO's leaders' considerable

connections in the climate change mitigation domain, to further and sustain the interests

of TCP during its nascency. Further, interviewees acknowledged the importance of

another presence oin TCP's foundation, not only passionate about the cause but also

simply different from Amazon. Adds another participant,

> we really wanted to be aligned with a really influential a strong voice on
> climate…to give us that sense of credibility…it's also this idea around a
> third party being this neutral entity that brings incredible amount of depth,
> and expertise, about what's happening in the climate space, and how the
> climate pledge should really set up its foundational operations."

All interviewees that felt they had sufficient visibility into Amazon's relationship

with GO noted that TCP benefited from a "neutral party" co-Founder in GO.

In addition to probing into Amazon's and GO's dynamic during the early

foundation of TCP, the interview protocol asked respondents to comment on the current

division of roles between the co-founders. All interviewees that responded to the question

indicated that Amazon supported the vast majority of TCP's daily operations, with GO

enacting a more consultative, subject matter expertise role. "…At the end of the day…we

are responsible for…the daily operations of the pledge, I mean, all of that really falls with

Amazon." Functions represented by the interviewees included: copyediting and

storytelling, web design, communications, filmmaking, vendor management, strategic

partner management, and project management. Amazon's TCP organization encompasses

a holistic team to maintain and improve the daily operations and growth of the Pledge. It is important to note that the Amazon's TCP organization described above is structurally housed in the Sustainability division responsible for Amazon's intraorganizational initiatives to reduce carbon emissions within its own business.

Participants differentiated GO's role from Amazon's. While Amazon handled the "daily operations," GO handled awareness on climate change trends and research into potential signatories. One participant noted, ."..their role is to enhance the ideas, to debate to, make us aware, to engage…they're the ones who are looking ahead to see what's coming…and how we might position ourselves to be ready for what's happening in the Climate space in the future." And again, "[GO's role] is to help ensure TCP remains aligned with climate science and aware of the machinations of climate diplomacy and finance." Removed from the tactical operations of TCP, GO helped Amazon and fellow signatories peer into the future of this wicked problem and its solutions.

An additional consideration that surfaced in the discussion of Amazon's and GO's dynamic is the change in their relationship over time. Interviewees perceived a shift in Amazon's reliance on GO's familiarity with climate change. One participant remarked on the diminished reliance on sustainability and climate change expertise: ."..the longer some of us are on the team... I would step back from [saying Amazon relies on GO for subject matter expertise] and say, 'We don't need them the same way that we used to need them'. One recently hired interviewee assessed that "the GO team has comparatively less climate/sustainability subject matter experts than the Amazon side of TCP." This relatively new hire's subjective experience working with GO demonstrates starkly the change in reliance over time, as other respondents clearly indicated the importance of GO's expertise during TCP's founding. Complementing this change in

relationship over time is the fact that Amazon funded GO; two participants described a contractual relationship in which Amazon paid GO to perform the responsibilities described above.

A last curious insight about Amazon's relationship with GO is the variability in Amazonians' subjective experience with the co-founding organization. Of the six interview participants, two declined to answer questions about Amazon's relationship to GO due to a lack of familiarity working with the organization. Of the four that commented on the dynamic, their assessments of the relationship in May-June 2023 varied significantly. While some indicated weekly or almost daily communication with GO, others indicated a much more infrequent correspondence with them. While some wished that Amazon consulted GO more frequently, others indicated a relationship in which "[Amazon] lead[s] on all things strategy, and GO follows." While some desired GO's greater involvement with TCP, others forecasted a less robust participation in the years to come.

Amazon's relationship to TCP signatories. In addition to Amazon's relationship with GO, the data surfaced insights about Amazon's relationship to other TCP signatories. This theme appeared with each interviewee as they described their respective roles with the TCP team and the TCP work streams they owned. Examples of such work streams include partnering with signatories to share compelling stories about decarbonization efforts, completing User Experience and technical Beta testing for the Passport platform with several trusted signatories, and conducting multi-year joint-collaborative projects (such as fleet electrification and low-carbon jet fuel utilization as described in the introduction) with one or more signatories to generate real-world impact for all participating organizations.

A concrete example of Amazon's relationship to signatories that emerged Amazon's relationship with the signatories that operate and utilize Climate Pledge Arena, the world's first carbon net zero sports arena and large event venue. The Seattle Kraken (an NHL hockey team that plays at Climate Pledge Arena), Seattle Storm (WNBA basketball team), Oak View Group (developer for Climate Pledge Arena's construction) and Climate Pledge Arena itself (responsible for the arena's daily functioning) are all signatories and work in close concert with Amazon to further the interests of TCP. While only one participant shed light onto this unique relationship between Amazon and signatories, the vast majority of that participant's interview detailed this dynamic as it encompasses their daily work. Shared the participant about this relationship, "The partnership [between Amazon and the Kraken, Storm, Oak View Group, and Climate Pledge Arena] has allowed us to create…a team of advocates to storytell and…drive that narrative for us." Through in-game experiences, events, and the integration of TCP content and live exhibits, this partnership and the arena itself serve as emblematic representations of Amazon's relational dynamic with TCP signatories.

This same microcosm of the larger relational dynamic between Amazon and its fellow signatories revealed an interorganizational insight: how differences in Amazon's ways of working and organizational values created constructive, interorganizational conflict. The participant described above detailed how Amazon employees' tendency of "relentlessly innovating on behalf of [its] customers," a practice known commonly to Amazon employees as 'Customer Obsession', led to interorganizational friction with the other Climate Pledge Arena partners. One related anecdote that surfaced during data collection was the persistence of Amazon's TCP organization in integrating TCP's "Future Forward" documentary series into an in-game segment at a Seattle Kraken

hockey game. Given the marketing revenue that the Kraken would have to forgo in order to play the video, stakeholders expressed concerns about the decision. Amazon's TCP organization, however, invoked its legitimate power as owner of the arena's naming rights to ensure the documentary aired and Climate Pledge Arena customers visualized the value of the joint-collaboration initiative depicted. While the friction that this decision caused between the Kraken and Amazon's TCP organization, the constructive conflict that it generated ultimately drove the best interests of TCP. The same participant concluded, "…our relentless nature of pursuit [for the Customer's best interest] was a difficult adjustment. But one where we shine and actually…we're looking out for the arena and their best interests as well."

While each interviewee held their own subjective experience about working with other signatories, the most compelling data on this subject came in the form of four word pictures. One particular question in the interview protocol invited the participants to visualize the relationship between Amazon, GO, and the Signatories and to describe the image that surfaces into their minds. Four participants verbalized a word picture in response to this question, three of which addressed the Amazon-Signatory relationship; additionally, one participant provided an analogy and word picture without the interviewer soliciting it. These visualizations of the TCP network yielded insights into the participants' conceptualization of TCP, as well as their aspirations for TCP's future TD.

A first word picture from a participant characterized the vast amount of energy that Amazon puts out in comparison to the signatories, as well as the little reciprocal energy that the participant experienced from the signatories in return. When prompted, the participant stated "Amazon would be big, domineering. And then the others would be like spokes on the side…I don't think of a hub-and-spoke model because I think by and

large we feed a lot out. I don't think we get a lot back from any of them." The interviewer prompted the interviewee if, in reply to the first sentence above, a hub-and-spoke model characterized the relationship between the organizations. The participant quickly negated as indicated in the second sentence above, due to the one-way flow of energy and information from Amazon to the signatories that this participant experienced.

A second image provided by an interviewee was that of a crew of Air Traffic Controllers. This participant worked with other signatories on almost a daily basis but acknowledged their relatively minimal expertise in the Sustainability and climate change domains. ."..we're [Amazon TCP employees] basically we have all these people as this community. And we're not necessarily the right ones that they need to talk to about a question…for example, I'm not a sustainability expert. I can't help them with the work they're doing. But what I can do is build something that directs traffic and…makes those connections so that they can go off and do the work." This participant recognized the vastness of expertise and resources available to signatories in the network if they could perform the task of facilitating the right connections.

Another visualization of Amazon and its relationships to its fellow Pledge members is a 400-seat Auditorium one might find in an undergraduate class at a large university. Utilizing the analogy of a teacher to student ratio, the participant acknowledged how the growing TCP signatory base meant less individualized attention from Amazon to their fellow signatories. Whereas the first 25 or 50 early Pledge signatories may have experienced more individual engagement, that level of attention is not scalable as TCP's signatory base grows at an exponential rate. When the interviewer probed further, asking the participant to imagine where in the 'auditorium' Amazon might be seated among its 400+ fellow 'students', the participant added, ."..initially, I

might say…front and center, like, right by the teacher…but then I also think that actually maybe they're like in the middle back of the auditorium because…they have the global view. You know, they've been there the longest. They don't need as much…personal attention as being up front [in the 'class'], but can…see the professor but also see everyone because everyone's coming in." The participant further imagined that perhaps Amazon was "front and center" at the outset of TCP but is no longer. Last, the participant completed the visual by stating, ."..And I think that Amazon is sitting next to GO and they're sharing notes." The two co-founding organizations sit in the back of the room, sharing a global view of the Pledge, its current signatories, and prospective signatories entering the room.

Another visualization of Amazon's relationship to the signatory base that slightly conflicts with the auditorium image above was an "exclusive clubhouse." This word picture arrived unsolicited by the interviewer and was part of the participant's sense-making. In this example, the participant considered the current size of TCP's network and of Amazon's desire to add value to signatories' experience in exchange for their commitment to pursuing carbon net zero by 2040. The interviewee noted, ."..so we're still kind of an exclusive clubhouse in some ways, because we don't have…10,000 or 20,000 companies, we still only have less than 500…we're still trying to show value for our signatories….and I think that that exclusivity factor is still there, but we're not just a start up anymore. We're like a clubhouse." Whereas the third word image indicated that Amazon can no longer provide individualized attention to signatories, this visual recognizes that value that the current size provides and envisions an exponentially larger TCP network.

Amazon's relationship to other stakeholders. Following the thread above, a fifth and final word picture visualized Amazon's relationship less with its fellow signatories but more with other stakeholders that participate in the sustainability and climate change work of TCP. One participant emphasized Amazon's relationship to government institutions (e.g. UN, US Department of Energy) and nonprofit organizations due to their role facilitating such work on a daily basis. As theclimatepledge.com website and interview data indicated, one nonprofit that frequently partnered with Amazon is We Mean Business, "a global nonprofit coalition working with the world's most influential businesses to take action on climate change" (The Climate Pledge, 2023d). As this participant surveyed Amazon's work with this partner, they conceived:

> A three-ringed Venn diagram. Each org has their own unique membership base and contacts (Amazon, GO, and…We Mean Business). [The three organizations] all overlap in our focus on addressing climate change and participation in the major events/reports of this field.

This participant recognized the varied interests of these organizations and the singular focus that compelled them to work together and engage around climate change. theclimatepledge.com describes We Mean Business on its "Partners" page, along with six other organizations: The Nature Conservancy, Race to Zero, TED Countdown, Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), The SME Climate Hub, and National Geographic Society. Evidence of Amazon's relationship with these Partners appears on the website and in interview data as well. Interviewees detail the "In the Green" TED Countdown series, in which six signatories conducted 'TED Talk'-style monologues for TED's "global initiative that champions and accelerates solutions to the climate crisis." The National Geographic Society was featured in five of the 81 articles on the website's

'Stories' page over a 13-month span; one such 'Spotlight' article was published by

Amazon's TCP Director Sally Fouts (The Climate Pledge Team, 2019).

One participant acknowledged the importance of having additional stakeholders

because, similar to the function of GO, these institutional bodies provide a neutral

organization around which the signatories feel more equal and less subject to Amazon's

influence:

> [Regarding] transportation, we have a program…with 14 projects: the
> Smart Freight Center and the Smart Freight Buyers Alliance are really key
> players…across all those projects. And they're really the glue so that
> companies really feel like it's not just The Climate Pledge, or Amazon
> driving certain projects…. [they] level the playing field.

This participant indicated that government bodies with whom Amazon collaborates and

networks in which Amazon and other signatories participate served as levelers for

purpose-driven, collaborative work.

In addition to the participants' experience with stakeholder partners, several

participants vocalized the importance of contractor agencies in making TCP function

effectively. Three of the six interviewees referenced third party vendors responsible for

the onboarding and database management of TCP signatories, the user experience and

production of Passport, the new social media platform, and the production of other types

of media. These agencies include Axero (an intranet platform that Amazon utilized to

produce Passport), Teleion (a digital media company responsible for Passport's

functionality and various other key functions), and Media.Monks (responsible for

Passport's user experience and design). Some of the employees with these contracted

agencies even have email addresses with Amazon domains to facilitate communication

with stakeholders and signatories and appear in Amazon's intranet organization chart as

contractors reporting into TCP Senior Management.

In a similar display of these agencies' close integration with Amazon's TCP organization, Media.Monks extensively details its involvement with the Pledge on its website. The user experience and design company cites its work on www.theclimatepledge.com's design and voice, the website's 'Time Tunnel' feature that charts the chronology of TCP, and the design of Passport. Media.Monks' TCP "case study" ends with a quotation from Sally Fouts, the director of Amazon's TCP organization, touting the agency's partnership with Amazon.

Signatories' relationships to one another. A final relational dynamic that surfaced in the data is how signatories relate to one another. As mentioned in the *Amazon to TCP Signatories* section above, participants indicate a relational dynamic in which Amazon's TCP organization exerts considerably more energy than the signatories reciprocate. Participants overwhelmingly applied this same sentiment when describing relationships and collaboration between the signatories themselves. One participant described inter-signatory collaboration requiring Amazon to "give them a push," while another remarked, "what we'd love to see is more signatories…organically connecting to work on projects together…where can we find these places where the signatories work together?"

Participants observed that while inter-signatory relations have required Amazon's facilitation in the past, there are certain channels by which this desired collaboration occurs. One such method is through "joint-collaboration" initiatives where one or more signatories participate in a mutually beneficial project, with or without Amazon's involvement. A participant noted that once Amazon fostered the connection between signatories around a mutually beneficial idea, signatories demonstrated a willingness to collaborate. The participant observed, ."..The strongest trend is that…when you have an

opportunity to offer to a company in terms of how they can A solve a problem, and B do

it faster when they do it together with another signatory...They're very eager to share, use

case data and information to help solve a very specific challenge." These joint-

collaboration initiatives not only generate real-world "measuring reporting,

decarbonisation, or nature based solutions," they foster inter-signatory collaboration in a

way that previously challenged the capabilities of TCP.

A second method of strengthening the inter-signatory relational dynamic is

through signatories attending events and the TCP annual summit. Between attending TCP

events at climate change conferences and summits together and TCP's annual summit

(the first of which occurred in 2022 and another of which is scheduled for 2023), it is

observed that relationships built during in-person events foster inter-signatory relations

and collaboration. One participant stated:

> It's great to see the signatories come together in person, and start to just
> get to know each other and understand what their issues are. There's
> nothing like that exchange that you have when you're really in person
> and…getting connected. … What I love about the pledge and the way that
> we've been set up is that we just have so many multiple avenues where
> signatories have an opportunity to…engage with each other.

A third and final means of fostering inter-signatory relations segues neatly into

the next section: the Passport platform. The following section describes what participants

overwhelmingly aspire will be not only a third avenue of engagement between signatories

but also emblematic of Amazon's next phase of evolution as Convener.

Passport and Aligned Aspirations for Convening Strategy

Described on TCP's website as a "virtual destination for climate action," Passport

is a relatively new TCP platform. Launched May 8, 2023 in the midst of this case study's

interviews, the platform provides TCP signatories an exclusive place to connect and

collaborate around the race to Net Zero. Six of six interviewees were excited about Passport and their aspirations for facilitating inter-signatory relations and fostering impactful collaboration. Similarly, TCP's website boasted a landing page promoting and driving signatories to join the platform, an animated promotional video, and a press release on the website's 'Stories' section. Given participants' unanimously positive, aspirational sentiment about Passport and the extensive multimedia content described, a more detailed introduction of Passport is warranted to capture Amazon's role as convener in TCP.

Participants described Passport as a "private online community" and "mini social media site" inspired by the look and feel of LinkedIn. The platform's production involved three contractor agencies over a twelve-month span to transform an intranet software platform into the product that ultimately launched on May 8, 2023. Participants described the coordination effort between different stakeholders: Amazon, the three agencies contracted for production (Axero, Teleion, and Media.Monks), internal Amazon employees recruited for Beta Testing and "Bug Bashing," and signatories requested to perform user experience and technical Beta testing. In parallel, Amazon TCP employees preemptively populated the platform with exclusive content for signatories to access upon joining Passport. TCP's website described this content as "exclusive access to partner experts and leading innovators," "helpful guides, kits, files, and links that can equip your team" and the ability to "collaborate with the wider signatory community using real-time discussions, forums, and direct messages." Summing up the opportunity communicated to current and prospective TCP signatories is the tagline that greets any viewer of Passport's landing page: "Passport is where signatories come together."

Delving into the data collected around Passport, Amazon's TCP employees clearly communicate a collective hope that the platform will foster organic, inter-signatory relations and collaboration. While all participants demonstrated this aspiration through their responses, one participant's sound bite synthesized Amazon's TCP organization's hope for the platform: "I think that Passport is probably one of our strongest ways that… we [Amazon's TCP organization] can get out of the middle and [signatories] can…move forward with each other…" As previously, described, research participants expressed the challenges of not only receiving the reciprocal energy and engagement from signatories towards Amazon but also fostering inter-signatory relationships. Whereas previously Amazon pushed like- minded signatories together around joint-collaborative projects, Amazon's team hopes that Passport will provide an environment in which that process will happen organically. That same participant, interviewed three days after Passport's launch, acknowledged evidence of the immediate fulfillment of their team's collective hope. "Passport is really a great tool, which…we just launched and already, just in the short period of time, we see signatories talking about how they're open to collaborate."

In addition to Amazon-to-signatory and signatory-to-signatory dynamics, participants described an aspiration to see Passport serve as a source for TCP storytelling and feedback. Storytelling surfaced as a consistent First Order Concept that receives its own treatment below; however, participants hope that the platform will serve as a listening mechanism for compelling stories and for ways to improve the TCP network. Stated one participant heavily involved in Passport's production, "There's a lot of great work out there that isn't being surfaced…these signatories all have sustainability…people working on problems that have good stories to tell. So there is some work right now to try

to make it easier for us to be kind of a platform for those signatories to tell those stories. Passport is an excellent resource in order to…communicate with them." Amazon's TCP org hopes that the forum and direct messaging features in Passport become a conduit for stories that they might share on the TCP website and other media.

In addition to their aspirations for Passport, they recognize the challenges the platform poses and barriers to its success. One of the challenges participants observed is the effort and finesse required to bring disparate organizations, sometimes competitors, together "in a collaborative pre-competitive way" while maintaining legal, equitable, and effective relationships between companies. No matter how they might communicate more effectively on Passport, the machinations of interorganizational collaboration still pose a challenge signatories must learn to overcome. Remarked one participant, "I don't think anybody's tried to do this before where we take all these companies and try to get them to…share knowledge with each other and collaborate in this way." The unprecedented nature of using an exclusive social media platform to connect the largest companies in the world around climate change and carbon net neutrality was not lost on the research participants.

Another challenge one participant observed is the need for sufficient resources to properly manage and facilitate Passport on behalf of the signatory base. While participants remarked that Passport's premise allows TCP to scale for the future as the signatory base grows, an adequate number of people will be required to effectively manage the online community. An interviewee commented, "I feel confident that everyone would agree that Passport is such a great resource, but we need more internal people dedicated to it. Right now, it's just really a skeleton crew…to be able to make it make it valuable but also…just to have the bandwidth to engage with signatories so

signatories find the value." Mixed with participants' aspirations for Passport are participants' concerns about the challenge of facilitating this platform for the good of the TCP network.

The launch of Passport and universally aspirational sentiments uncovered in the data about the platform symbolize a larger theme of research participant alignment around convening strategy. Five of the six participants vocalized a clear shift in strategy for Amazon's TCP organization from a heavy focus on signatory recruitment to a focus on signatory engagement and facilitating measurable action towards carbon net zero. The only participant that did not explicitly state the same strategic shift works daily in collaboration with signatories on TCP's marketing and fan experience at Climate Pledge Arena, a work process also symbolic of this strategic move. One participant stated, "we've moved away from just recruiting and marketing and now we've moved into a new phase where we are convening and engaging." Participants' alignment around the new strategy hearkens back to a quotation cited above about "getting out of the middle" and enabling the signatories to "move forward together."

Another participant's projection of TCP's future and the future of Amazon's role in TCP magnifies this strategic change. "I think it will continue to grow. I mean, the idea, truly, is that TCP really becomes a convening platform for companies to…come together and then take action. So fast forward three, five years, we're going to see those projects happening." This shift in focus towards actionable results in tackling climate change also appears in a conversation around measures of success:

Our main key metric has really been around the number of signatories. And that's kind of been what we've used today. However, as we're evolving, we're trying to create what we're calling joint action projects, which are projects that are led by Amazon and

led by our teams, but…bring people together, different companies together to take action

on whatever the issue is…How many different companies we have signed up to joint

action projects, and then what the companies are doing through them that will end up

becoming a success metric as well.

As evidenced in the dialogue cited above, the advent of Passport and the change

in Amazon's TCP strategy was salient to all research participants.

An additional consideration regarding strategic alignment among research

participants was the ubiquitous recognition that Amazon's TCP organization requires

new processes and technologies to meet the growing signatory base. The number of

signatories continues to grow at an exponential rate, and participants acknowledge that it

would be unreasonable for the organization to grow to maintain the ratio of TCP

employees to signatories held at the Pledge's founding. As a result, multiple participants

discussed new work processes and software platforms to help the organization scale to

meet the growing number. Technologies mentioned implemented to streamline work

processes include providing Slack Connect to signatories and Amazon TCP employees (a

privilege not afforded to all Amazon employees), using the software AirTable to manage

and distribute communications data, and the aspiration to use Passport for scalable

communication. In comparison to the individual emails and conference calls used to

recruit signatories in the "early days," research participants identified a need to change to

more scalable strategies to meet the growing signatory base.

A Transorganizational System Subject to Environmental Pressures

A third First Order Concept salient to research participants was a pattern of

communication around environmental pressures influencing their daily work and TCP

itself. Public communications from Amazon's CEO Andy Jassy included reductions-in-

force of approximately 18,000 employees throughout the organization in November-January 2023 (Amazon.com, 2023). While no participants explicitly verbalized experiencing a reduction-in-force within the TCP organization, two participants recalled a recent organizational restructuring. Another participant experienced budget cuts that limited a "dream it, build it, do it" attitude toward innovation experienced prior to late 2022. Two participants utilized the term "Small but Mighty" to describe the team, and one expressed the explicit desire for additional human capital to support new work processes.

In addition to the economic slowdown, participants with longer tenure with TCP described experiencing concerns about TCP during its early days in the midst of the COVID19 Pandemic:

> …there was a lot of concern in the industry and also for us, having just co-founded The Climate Pledge, in what the Pandemic would do to progress on sustainability…would companies still be prioritizing this? Would they still be focused on it? Or were they going to let all of that go? Because suddenly there was a global health crisis and they had bigger fish to fry and it put things into perspective.

This concern about the pandemic's effect on TCP's success extended beyond corporate social responsibility to the very tactical recognition that TCP employees could no longer recruit signatories through in-person visits or events. Both pandemic-related concerns actually resulted in opportunities for TCP's success: the same participant reported that the health crisis woke companies up to the need to support sustainability and that innovations in virtual communication drove increases in the rate of signatory growth throughout the pandemic and shelter-in-place orders.

Amazon's New Capabilities as TCP Grows

The final First Order Concept that surfaced from the interview data and media is the recognition of Amazon's organizational capabilities that sustained TCP as it continues to grow and scale. The capabilities salient to research participants included relationship building, storytelling, leading the way: Amazon's carbon net zero success, and a nonprofit in a massive corporation.

Relationship building. Consistent with the convening relational dynamics treated earlier in this chapter, participants realized the importance of relationship building to TCP's success and Amazon's capacity to forge those relationships. One participant's musings on these issues characterizes the sentiment of four of the six interviewees on this important capability: "It's been about relationship building…we can't ever get around that. It's really, really important. And so, as we develop a personal relationship with signatories, and they know who you are, what you've done…that's what really helps keep them engaged."

A surprising insight on Amazon's relationship building capabilities is that this strength applied not only to its relationship with signatories but also to the contracting agencies that support the TCP organization's daily operations. One participant described a relationship with the agencies in which the agencies not only felt like a part of Amazon's TCP team, but were able to collaborate between each other in a high-trust environment:

> And one thing that's quite fun with that, as with our agencies and partners
> alike, they all feel very much a part of our team…And a lot more
> collaboration even between agencies; we'll take two agencies and put
> them in a room together and work with them to…figure out next steps. So,
> yeah, I think [the Amazon-agency relationship is] definitely a unique
> setup. Probably not only within Amazon, but within other larger
> companies. I don't think this is something that happens very frequently,

where you get kind of all these players from different places, kind of sharing a goal together.

Relationship building is an essential organizational capacity for Amazon, whether utilized to engage and collaborate with current and prospective signatories or to work effectively with agencies moving together towards TCP's Net Zero goals.

Storytelling. A second of Amazon's capabilities identified by research participants was storytelling. Amazon's TCP organization includes people and work processes focused on writing, producing, and communicating compelling stories about Amazon's and other signatories' efforts towards Carbon Net Neutrality. Three of the six interview participants included storytelling into their characterizations of how Amazon relates to its partners and signatories. One remark from a participant captures their prioritization of this capacity. "I think there's some interesting pieces with the work we're doing around storytelling as well. Super powerful to kind of get people involved. It's…a way to show action…to drive recruitment…. [and] to…promote the work that we're doing." This same interviewee acknowledged that there are undoubtedly stories that do not reach Amazon's storytellers due to the vastness of the signatory base and current listening mechanisms, as well as a hope that Passport will provide an avenue through which those stories might be captured and then shared.

A review of the public and internal TCP communication from Amazon highlights Amazon's prolific storytelling capacity. At the time of writing, TCP's website includes 81 publications on the "Stories" page between TCP's inception and July 2023. Separated into 42 Spotlights, 13 Events, 17 News, 3 Resources, and 6 Milestones, TCP's Stories feature describes a number of different partners and signatories of TCP (The Climate Pledge, 2023c). A portion of these Stories are video series, including the "Future

Forward" series narrating signatories' recent action to mitigate climate change, the "TED In the Green" speaker series featuring thought leaders from Amazon and other signatories, and "Why We Signed," a series of articles featuring new signatories' sustainability executives. Similarly, a review of internal communications to signatories and Amazon internal partners includes a monthly New and Noteworthy Newsletter. According to one research participant, New and Noteworthy boasts a 35% Open Rate, well above the average for a corporate, internal email newsletter in the United States (Fultz, 2023).

Leading the way: Amazon's carbon net zero success. Another salient component of Amazon's organizational capabilities was its leadership by example in the race to Net Zero. Interviewees recognized that Amazon's efforts to decarbonize, in spite of its position as a global superpower in the supply chain and consumer goods industries, encouraged signatories to join TCP and to partner with Amazon on how to pursue Carbon Net Neutrality themselves. A participant remarked:

> Amazon has historically had kind of a difficult, even negative reputation around climate, …it's about consumerism, and…packages arriving to your doorstep that [typically] take…gas from a gas-powered truck…. I actually think the fact that…so many…huge companies have joined…speaks really well to Amazon's reputation.

Carbon Net Neutrality efforts that interviewees listed included the effort to electrify Amazon's delivery fleet, consulting and hosting a "deep dive on plastics at [the] Circularity23 [conference]." Additional sustainability initiatives that Amazon facilitated include TCP Friendly program (reducing the carbon footprint for packaging) and efforts to standardize carbon reporting (The Climate Pledge, 2023c).

An additional way that Amazon acts as a thought leader in this space is by influencing its Value Chain to reduce its carbon footprint, a category known as Scope 3.

As described in the literature review, Scope 3 emissions include the carbon footprint for all organizations within a given organization's value chain. However, given Amazon's influence as a global economic power and co-Founder of TCP, it holds a unique influence on the organizations within its value chain. This influence positions Amazon to lead its peer signatories by example in the reduction of Scope 3 emissions. Explained one research participant:

> If we get other companies to sign The Climate Pledge and also commit to Net Zero that are within Amazon's value chain, then that's going to help bring down Amazon's overall scope three, and that's really, really important…we're putting more resources and energy into that identifying…companies that are in our value chain that generate the highest emissions, and then those are the ones we should be going after, to really get them to accelerate their sustainability goals.

Amazon holds a unique organizational capability due to its economy of scale and its influence as co-Founder of TCP.

A nonprofit in a massive corporation. A penultimate organizational capability that surfaced in the data regards the structural position of Amazon's TCP organization. Three of six participants characterized their experience working on TCP as a "Nonprofit" or "Start-Up," while all participants referenced the access and resources of Amazon, an employer of over 1.5 million people at the time of writing, at their disposal. The below subsections describe this First Order Concept into its two component parts.

A nonprofit. Three of six participants answered questions about their experience working on TCP as that of a "Nonprofit" or "Start-Up" separate and apart from the larger Amazon organization. Described as "a really unique team…a nonprofit within the company the way we operate…our own brand identity", characterizes this experience. A very tactical example another participant shared concerned their work email domain. "We have our own website, separate from Amazon. My email address is an Amazon email

address. Sometimes I wonder if [signatories] think of us as a separate entity." This second participant described their relationship to the greater Amazon organization as "in theory, treating Amazon as one of our signatories…" The subjective experience of Amazon employees in the TCP organization illustrates a unique capability to separate TCP from Amazon's other commercial interests and demonstrate good will to signatories and partners as a neutral party.

   In a massive corporation. Almost paradoxically to the experience described above, all participants described some sort of experience liaising with or borrowing resources from the greater Amazon network of companies. One participant described stakeholders' surprise when they learned about Amazon's larger investment in sustainability above and beyond the TCP organization. "I think it's fascinating when people learn that Amazon has a Sustainability department that has…I don't know, I think…200 people…The Climate Pledge we're like, 25 of us…we're just one part of that." Participants describe utilizing 'Amazonian' work processes ubiquitous to the company's culture, including Document Writing and creation of 'Flywheel' mechanisms. Put simply in summation by another interviewee, "I'm an Amazon employee, and I work for The Climate Pledge."

Second Order Themes

   While the First Order Concepts above utilize the language and terminology of the research participants, Second Order Themes use terms salient to the body of literature and apply First Order Concepts to theory. Ainsworth and Feyerherm's (2016) Transorganizational System Diagnostic Model, the Convener Robust Action Strategies formed through the works of Ferraro et. al (2015) and Alexander (2020), and Yin's Simple Time-Series analysis technique (2018) rose to the surface. These three

frameworks resonate with modern literature on TD, Conveners, and Case Studies respectively. Further, these models situate this study's findings within peer-reviewed academic discourse. At the same time that applying these peer-reviewed frameworks to the case lends the case legitimacy and yields new insights, applying this concrete case to the models advances the literature on the models themselves.

Transorganizational System Diagnostic Model

Applying the TS Diagnostic Model (Ainsworth & Feyerherm, 2016) situates the data collected in this study, as well as TCP TS, within a peer-reviewed open systems model. Figure 1 presents the applied findings and First Order Concepts to the TS diagnostic model as a means to synthesize and add coherence to the collected data.

Figure 1

Transorganizational System Diagnostic Model applied to Amazon's TCP Organization
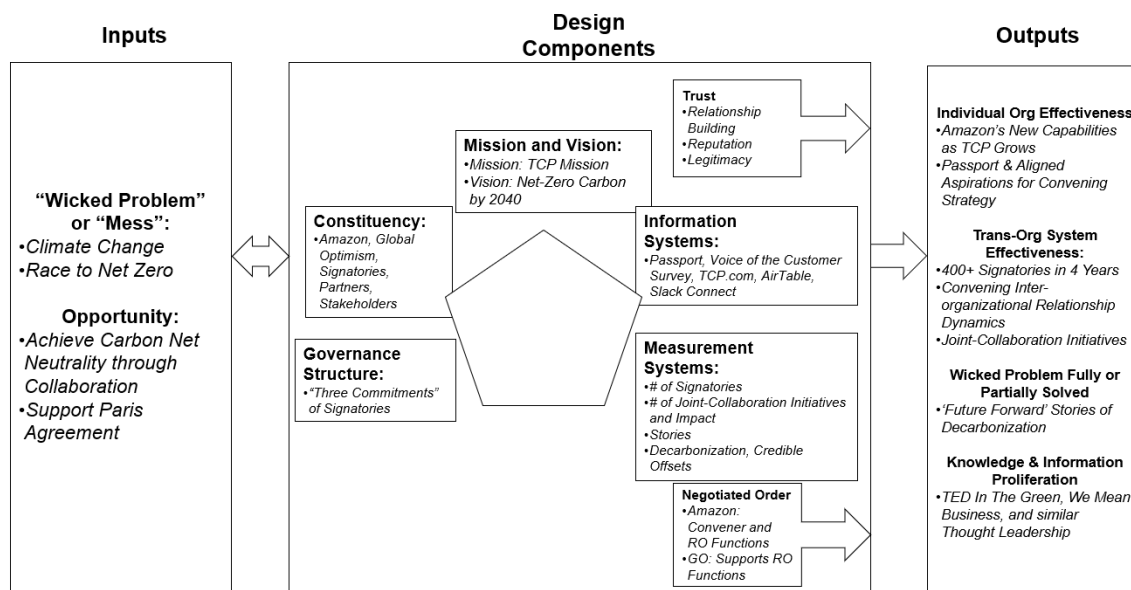
Source: Ainsworth and Feyerherm (2016), p. 773.

This author observed clear transorganizational inputs, design components, and outputs data from the case's interview data, as well as public and internal communication data. Notable is the theme of relationship building across the 'Trust' design component

and both the Individual Organization Effectiveness and Trans-Org System Effectiveness outputs. Additionally the findings indicate that Amazon fulfills functions of both a convener and a RO, while GO performs no convener functions (Alexander, 2020) and one of three RO functions ("Appreciation of emergent trends and issues; developing a shared image of a desired future") as defined by the literature (Trist, 1983, p. 275). This detail, paired with the knowledge that Amazon funds GO as part of its relationship with the organization, conflicted with this author's hypothesis that GO served as the sole RO in TCP's TS.

Convener Robust Action Tactics Model

A second model pertinent to this case study, the Convener Robust Action Tactics Model, categorically prescribes the coordinating energy that Convener's provide to a TS. The three tactics Ferraro et al. (2015) identified and two additional tactics that Alexander (2020) proposed represent the modern body of knowledge on convening activity. Below are the five robust action tactics defined between the two works, definitions of those tactics as prescribed by those researchers, and evidence from this case study's data collection representative of each tactic (Table 2).

When categorized into robust action tactics in Table 2, the findings of TCP's current state as a TS seem to indicate that Participatory Architecture is most prevalent while "multi-vocal inscription," "distributed experimentation," "operational resource development" and "role adjustment" are less prevalent. A limited focus on executing multi-vocal inscription tactics logically parallels a frequent concern that interviewees described: limited interaction and energy reciprocated by signatories towards Amazon. Similarly, less prevalence of "operational resource development" follows logically, as both the development of Passport and the facilitation of joint-collaboration initiatives are

recent endeavors in TCP's history. Last, while this author only identified one clear "role adjustment" First Order Concept, the unanimous reporting among interviewees of a shift in convening strategy renders this tactic more prevalent than the evidence in the table indicates.

Table 2

Robust Action Tactics Listed, Defined, and Applied to Case Study Findings

| Robust Action Tactics	Definition	Evidence
Participatory Architecture	A structure and rules of engagement that allow diverse and heterogeneous actors to interact constructively over prolonged timespans	• Mission and Vision of TCP • "Three Commitments" of Signatories • Communication platform and workflows (Slack, AirTable, The ClimatePledge.com, Passport) and workflows • Rhythm of events (TCP Annual Summit, climate change events, invitations to The Climate Pledge Arena)
Multi-Vocal Inscription	Discursive and material activity that sustains different interpretations among various audiences with different evaluative criteria, in a manner that promotes coordination without requiring explicit consensus	• Passport Forums • Spotlight Stories
Distributed Experimentation	Iterative action that generates small wins, promotes evolutionary learning, and increases engagement, while allowing unsuccessful efforts to be abandoned.	• Celebrations of signatory base milestones and signatory decarbonization and offset milestones • Voice of the Customer survey
Operational Resource Development	Initiatives that attempt to increase the effectiveness of how collective resources are deployed following or appearing to follow an existing trajectory	• Development of Passport Platform • Joint-collaboration initiatives
Role Adjustment	Action or disposition which adjusts or shows the convener to consider adjusting its role in the collective action	• Aligned Aspirations on Convening Strategy ("Get out of the middle") •

Sources: Alexander (2020), p. 453; Ferraro et al. (2015), p. 373

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Simple Time-Series Analysis: The Climate Pledge Milestones and Interorganizational

Collaboration Over Time

A final framework by which to synthesize and forge coherence of this case study is Yin's Simple Time Series analysis technique. One of five analysis techniques, Yin prescribes the chronological mapping of a single pattern or feature of the case over time. This chronology ultimately yields meta-insights about the subject of the case study (Yin, 2018). Below is the chronology of TCP key events and Amazon's interorganizational collaborative behaviors related to TCP (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Simple Time Series Analysis: Chronology of Events and Interorganizational

Collaboration from Findings
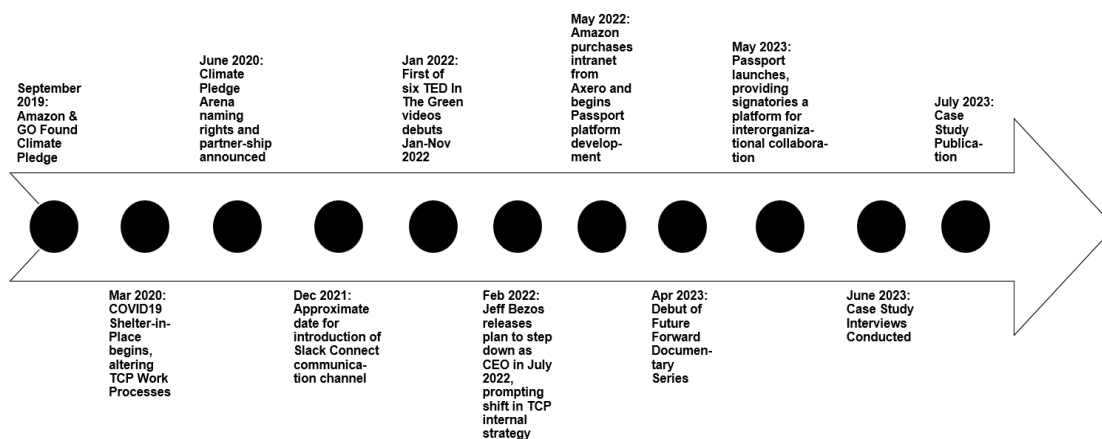
Source: Yin, 2018

While the chronology in Figure 2 is not an exhaustive list of events that impacted TCP uncovered in the case study, a pattern emerged when several impactful events are measured against interorganizational collaboration behaviors. As the findings identified, all interviewees sense the need to shift from "recruiting to convening and engaging." Whereas the early collaborative behaviors worked to raise awareness for TCP (Climate

Pledge Arena) and for the battle against climate change (TED In the Green), a shift

occurred following the reported departure of former CEO Jeff Bezos in February.

Initiatives like the Future Forward documentary series, Passport's development, and other

joint-collaboration initiatives not listed in the chronology followed Bezos' reported

departure. One research participant explicitly traced the CEO transition role to a

recognition among Amazon's TCP organization that their future work needed to

demonstrate action and impact; the interorganizational collaboration that followed

February 2022 is less brand recognition- and more results- and engagement-oriented.

Summary of Findings

The inductive First Order Concepts and synthetic Second Order Themes

demonstrated clear patterns of interview data, corroborated by TCP public and internal

communications, situated within the body of research relevant to this case study. These

four First Order Concepts are the aggregations of patterns from the 'ground-up' data;

upon applying the voice of academia to those findings in three Second Order Themes,

new insights appear. The next chapter below discusses the insights that come from these

findings and resulting theoretical and practical recommendations.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Reflecting on the findings reported in chapter 4 yielded three distinct subjects for discussion: how the findings answer the central research question and sub questions, the study's contributions to academic discourse, and recommendations for best-practice implementation. The first category contains this author's remarks on how the findings did and did not yield insights on the original research questions listed in chapter 3. The second discussion point considers the significance of this case study to the academic body of work. The last item comprises practical recommendations for Amazon's TCP organization from this author, also an Amazon employee, desiring to provide an actionable synthesis of the literature review and findings to the case study subject.

Reflection on Research Central Question and Sub Questions

At the crux of this case study was one central question and four sub questions about Amazon's role as convener of TCP. The First Order Concepts and Second Order Themes that make sense of this study's findings yield insights into the answers to these questions. Below are the conclusions drawn from the findings for each of the four sub questions, followed by a treatment of the central question.

Sub Question 1: What are Amazon's Relationships with Transorganization Partners?

This first sub question was the focus of the first section of the interview protocol: a series of questions about participants' experience with GO and with the other signatories of TCP. Correspondingly, the largest amount of interview data responds to this question and was captured in the First Order Concept "Convening Interorganizational Relationship Dynamics: Amazon, GO, Signatories, and Stakeholders." Amazon demonstrated the "robust action" required of conveners within the context of its

relationships with GO ("Amazon lead[s] on all things strategy, while GO follows"), with signatories (visualized through multiple word pictures as a relatively one-way flow of coordinating energy and information from Amazon to signatories), and with other stakeholders (facilitating initiatives and co-authoring content with government bodies and nonprofits). Public and internal communications corroborated this convening energy through relationship, as evidenced by Amazon's content output on behalf of all signatories featured on its 'Stories' page and the New and Noteworthy newsletter.

Sub Question 2: Have There Been Changes Over Time with Amazon's Role? If so, What are Those?

This question about change over time was manifested in the second portion of the interview protocol with a series of questions about Amazon's early foundation and history, shifts in role with TCP, and continuity in role with the TS. A Second Order Theme that informed the answer to this question was the Simple Time-Series Analysis in Figure 2. Amazon's role in the early history of the Pledge focused heavily on navigating the COVID-19 pandemic on recruiting signatories to join the Pledge. A watershed moment in the history of TCP occurred when Jeff Bezos stepped down from Amazon's CEO position, signaling a shift in Amazon's TCP strategy to ensure TCP is solving sustainability problems for Amazon while simultaneously pursuing cost effectiveness. In some ways, Amazon's convener role has remained the same throughout the history of the Pledge (sustaining the growth of Amazon's TCP organization and its larger sustainability organization) and in other ways it has changed (shifting focus from signatory recruiting to signatory engagement and joint-collaboration initiatives).

Sub Question 3: What do Participants in TCP See For the Future Focus?

The First Order Concept 'Passport & Aligned Aspirations for Convening Strategy' informed Sub Question 3. Participants envisioned a future of organic collaboration between signatories through the Passport platform. The unanimity of participants' consensus around this aspiration demonstrated a collective understanding among Amazon's TCP organization that this team that had served as the impetus for action yet cannot continue to be the sole source of coordinating energy as TCP scales and grows. Additionally, it was clear that TCP participants saw 'joint-collaboration initiatives' as the future of the Pledge: working together to take action in an impactful way towards the goal of carbon net neutrality by 2040.

Sub Question 4: What are Implications for Practice (Post-Interview and Informed by Academic Literature)?

Unlike the other three sub questions, this final inquiry was not answered by interview data alone but with the introduction of Second Order Themes and the 'Voice of the Literature'. The synthesis of the academic body of research and the data collected during the study indicate several actionable recommendations that Amazon's TCP organization may take to pursue convening best-practices going forward. These recommendations are detailed in the 'Recommendations for Best-Practice Implementation' later in this chapter.

And finally, a reflection on the central question at the heart of the research:

Central Question: How did Amazon's Role as a Convener Impact The Climate Pledge, as Experienced by Stakeholders?

Interview data and the prolific output in public and internal communications from Amazon suggest the impacts that Amazon's role as a convenor has had on TCP to this

point. Amazon and its TCP organization provided "robust action" in co-founding the

Pledge with GO, navigating difficult environmental challenges to grow the Pledge's

signatory base, innovating a new social network for signatories to collaborate organically

together, and working with signatories and stakeholders to initiate 'joint-collaboration

initiatives' while simultaneously pursuing own aims at reaching carbon net neutrality by

2040.

It is worth noting that this central question also invited the opinion of TCP's

stakeholders about Amazon's role as TCP's convener and its impact while doing so. The

research conducted here is limited to Amazon employees working for TCP, which

indicates that TCP's other stakeholders (e.g. GO, other signatories, government bodies,

and nonprofit partners) may have additional valuable insights in response to this question.

A discussion of the limitations to this research and recommendations for further research

is included in the penultimate section of this chapter.

Contributions to Academic Discourse

The findings from this research provide a concrete case study featuring one of the

highest-profile organizations in the modern world in a transorganizational system trying

to solve for one of the wickedest of wicked problems. One contribution to the academic

body of work is the application of peer-reviewed frameworks to the study's findings. The

Second Order Themes provide concrete applications to the Transorganizational Systems

Diagnostic model (Ainsworth & Feyerherm, 2016), Robust Action Tactics Model

(Alexander, 2020; Ferraro et al., 2015), and Yin's Simple Time-Series analysis technique

(Yin, 2018). An additional contribution to the literature resides in the reflections on each

of those framework applications. Subject matter related to various interorganizational

phenomena surface in those reflections, including: transorganizational systems and

transorganizational development, conveners, referent organizations, and interorganizational collaboration. Last, considering TCP's significance to carbon net neutrality and the battle to mitigate climate change, this research adds to the bodies of literature studying climate change and carbon net zero.

Recommendations for Best-Practice Implementation

This study's findings also support actionable recommendations for Amazon's TCP organization. Below are brief descriptions of those recommendations, underpinned by relevant findings that supported them.

Develop Signatory and Partner Listening Mechanisms for Key Storytelling Products

Interview data indicated a number of different means for Amazon to communicate out to signatories and to the general public: TCP's website, social media, TCP storytelling content, and the New and Noteworthy Newsletter. Findings also indicated a general, regular listening mechanism in the Voice of the Customer survey, supplemented by marketing analytics for some of those communications channels. However, findings did not indicate listening mechanisms directly linked to the storytelling products themselves. Additionally, one participant expressed a concern that despite consistently preparing and distributing information to signatories through a particular communications channel, the participant seldom received communication regarding or feedback about that channel in return. The findings invited Amazon's TCP organization to construct listening mechanisms onto each storytelling product to receive feedback and provoke dialogue with signatories and partners, increasing the capacity for interorganizational collaboration.

Develop Current Talent and Attract New Talent to Unlock New Convening Capabilities

Despite the consistent focus on capabilities and organizational capacity that Amazon built throughout TCP's history, research participants identified additional capability gaps as well. One interviewee reported that Amazon's TCP organization "need[s] more sustainability experts on our team who can talk the talk and have a proven work history…This is also necessary to develop more action-focused programs [and] joint action projects." Additional findings identified a need for community management and signatory engagement support for the new Passport platform. "Passport is such a great resource, but we need more internal people dedicated to it…to have the bandwidth to engage with signatories so that signatories find the value." These findings parallel the aspiration to shift TCP's strategy to "convention and engagement"; as a result, this author recommends developing these capabilities in internal talent and attracting new talent with these capabilities.

Integrate Transorganizational System Diagnostic Model into TCP Strategic Planning

A third actionable recommendation to Amazon's TCP organization is to iteratively employ the TS Diagnostic model utilized in the 'Second Order Themes: Contributions to Academic Discourse' section above. The framework's authors propose four functions for this framework to support the construction of organizational capacity in a TS: "during the start-up phase when TS are in the early stages of formation," "periodic assessments of TS functionality after the TS begins working toward goal attainment," "diagnose causes of TS inertia," and "to further develop and expand our understanding of the uniqueness of the TS" (Ainsworth & Feyerherm, 2016, p. 778). This author points the second and third purposes for the model to the subjects of this study: a regular pulse

check on TCP's effectiveness to support strategic planning and a starting place for transorganizational 'stuckness' that Amazon may experience.

Invite Further Academic Study of TCP to Profile Climate Change Transorganizational Development

Last, this author invites Amazon to consider a more robust academic study of its role as convener in TCP, as well as further study of TCP for other transorganizational subject matter. This TS of over 400 signatories and partners, convened by one of the largest and most powerful companies in the world, is a rich resource for academic research. This recommendation receives further elaboration in the 'Study Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research' section below.

Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this study yields helpful insight into Amazon's role as convener in TCP TS, certain limitations constrained the effectiveness of the case study. A more robust interview data set within Amazon's TCP organization, as well as interviews with GO, and with other TCP signatories and stakeholders would render a more complete image of the TCP TS and of Amazon's convening role. Further, access to observe Amazon's convening work processes may yield significant insights as an additional data collection method supplementary to interviews and organizational artifacts. Interview findings indicate that opportunities to conduct such observations include climate change events, TCP's annual summit, and virtual engagements with GO, signatories, and other stakeholders. This author recommends revisiting this case study with this additional access in order to maximize the academic and practical insights held within Amazon's role convening TCP.

Additionally, opportunities exist to pursue other TD research on TCP TS. One theme that surfaced throughout this research is transorganizational and interorganizational communication. The Passport platform is an interesting model for fostering communication and collaboration between organizations in a digital age; a network communications study of the dialogue Passport engenders may be a helpful model for transorganizational academia and practice. Another salient theme in the findings was the importance of storytelling to recruit and engage signatories; this author recommends further research into this phenomenon with a TD lens.

Conclusion

Amazon's convening role in TCP can help to mitigate one of the 'wickedest' of problems facing today's world. The team members that comprise Amazon's TCP organization care deeply about the cause and about the organization. One interviewee captures the ethos of this work: ""…We [Amazon and TCP signatories] need to go down every single alley and every single avenue to ensure that we're finding the best solutions to move as quickly as possible, because we know we're in a decisive decade to take action and the window to do so is rapidly closing." And again: "I feel proud working on The Climate Pledge team…I think the work that we're doing is important, in fact, I can't imagine not working on climate and sustainability topics, considering all that we know about what's happening to our planet right now." This case study details the convening energy Amazon exerts towards this urgent and vital goal: reaching Carbon Net Neutrality in support of the global effort to mitigate climate change.

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Appendix A: Sample Email to Interview Subject

Dear [Participant],

My name is Charles Billingsley, and I am a Master's of Science in Organization Development student in the Graziadio School of Business at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study in which I am studying Amazon's role in The Climate Pledge, and I would appreciate your help! Please know that this is a completely voluntary study and you are under no obligation to participate. Should you choose, your participation in the study would be through an interview with me that ideally would be video recorded and transcribed and is anticipated to take no more than 60 minutes.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place during and after the study. Your audiovisual call would be private and deidentified. I will store your audiovisual recording on a local, password-protected computer and immediately delete the recording after creation and validation of the interview transcription.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in this study, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your participation,
Charles Billingsley
Pepperdine University
Graziadio School of Business
Student, Master's of Science in Organization Development

Appendix B: Sample Email Response to Accepted Audiovisual Interview

Subject Line: Research Informational Interview: [Participant] and Charles
Hello [Participant],

Thank you so much for taking the time to chat! Looking forward to connecting.

For your Confidentiality, I have scheduled our time together on Zoom. Here is the Zoom bridge link:

[Zoom Link]

Additionally, any research interview of this kind requires a signed informed consent form. Please take a moment to complete this Qualtrics survey [link] as well.

Thank you once again for your willingness to participate. Talk soon!

Appendix C: Sample Email Response to Accepted Asynchronous Written Interview

Hello [Participant],

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in my research study! As previously stated, I am Charles Billingsley, Sr. PM with Amazon Logistics and Master's Degree candidate with Pepperdine University. I am studying Amazon's role in The Climate Pledge. Please find my research questions in the document attached and feel free to answer those questions that are most salient to your experience.

Additionally, please find attached this Qualtrics survey (link), which includes Pepperdine's research Informed Consent Form.

Thanks again!

Best Regards,

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

IRB #: 23-01-2078
Participant Study Title: *The Climate Pledge: A Transorganizational Development Case Study*

Formal Study Title: The Climate Pledge Transorganizational Study: How did Amazon's role as a Convener impact The Climate Pledge (TCP), as experienced by stakeholders?

Authorized Study Personnel
Principal Investigator: Charles Billingsley Mobile: (818) 823-1900

Key Information:
If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:
● Males and Females between the ages of 18-99
● Procedures will include 30-60 minute online, audiovisual interviews
● (1) number of visits are required
● These visits will take a (1) amount of hours total
● Minimal risks of loss of confidentiality and cognitive fatigue are associated with this study
● You will be paid ($0.00) amount for your participation
● You will be provided a copy of this consent form

Invitation
You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
You are being asked to participate in this study due to your job role's work with The Climate Pledge. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate.

What is the reason for doing this research study?
The purpose of this research is to understand how Amazon's role as "Convener" has impacted The Climate Pledge, a transorganizational network of corporations committed to pursue the goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2040. The interviews conducted for this study will detail the history and evolution of Amazon's role in The Climate Pledge over time.

What will be done during this research study?
You will be asked to complete one-time, 30-90 minute online audiovisual interviews about how you experience and perceive Amazon's role in the Climate Pledge.

How will my data be used?
Your de-identified interview data will be sent to public relations professionals outside of Pepperdine University for the purpose of validating the confidentiality of any published

findings. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed before the data are shared.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?
This research presents possible risk of loss of confidentiality because the interview questions are related to your current or former job role. Additionally, the research interview presents possible risk of cognitive fatigue. Breaks will be offered as needed to mitigate any cognitive fatigue experienced during the interview.

There is no information being collected that would pose risk to any personal employee outcomes at work. Participant's response to these questions should not pose any risks to the participant's reputation, employability, financial standing, and educational advancement.

What are the possible benefits to you?
Potential benefits from this study include new insights on Amazon's role as Convener with The Climate Pledge and contributing to continuous improvements in Amazon's role as Convener. However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?
The benefits to society may include a more effective transorganizational system for The Climate Pledge. The benefits to social science may include better understanding of how the "Convener" role pragmatically impacts transorganizational systems.

What will being in this research study cost you?
There is no cost to you for being a participant in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?
You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?
Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?
Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data.
Any hard-copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 5 years after the study is complete.
The following steps will be taken to ensure your electronic data confidentiality and security:
1. Creating private meetings for each audiovisual recording and ensuring that a new zoom meeting link and a new password is generated for each participant.
2. Enabling the waiting room function (available under meeting options). This allows the host to approve each new attendee before they can access the room.

3. Asking the participant to change their displayed name (and remove static photo displayed when video function is off) when they enter the Zoom room and before starting recording. This will further protect additional personally identifying data from being collected (such as their full names) in association with their voice and video.
4. Explaining to participants before pressing recording what Zoom's encryption policy means. Although other people will not be able to access the audio or video content created from an encrypted meeting, this information is not private from Zoom Inc.
5. Making sure all participants provide verbal consent before you start recording. Aside from obtaining their written consent via the consent form, it is expected that all researchers also verbally consent participants prior to recording.
6. Recording directly to the computer and not to Zoom cloud. All Zoom recorded meetings will be saved to a local password-protected computer.
7. Only keeping video and audio files long enough to enable written transcription of materials. Once the transcriptions are created and validated, the video and audio files will be deleted from my local drive promptly.

For participant confidentiality and to mitigate risk of undue coercion, all interviews will be conducted individually to ensure the responses of the research subject are only known to the subject and the researchers. Electronic data will be protected by a local password protected computer and a secure network. The coding all audiovisual and transcription data with a randomly generated number to remove participants' identifying information. I will exclude Your identifying information will be excluded, and data resulting from your interview will be aggregated in published documents, with the exception of direct quotations upon acquiring verbal consent from you to do so.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional
Review Board (IRB):
Phone: 1(310)568-2305
Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator, with Pepperdine University, or with any organizations connected to or members of The Climate Pledge. You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Name:
Participant Signature:
Date:

Investigator certification:
My signature certifies that all elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the subject. In my judgment, the participant possesses the capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent
Date

Appendix E: Full Interview Protocol for Amazon Employees on The Climate

Change Team

Interview Questions for Amazon Employees on The Climate Pledge Program (Convener)

The first part of our interview asks a series of questions about your team's experience working with Global Optimism and other TCP Signatories. If you can think of specific examples to contextualize your responses, please feel free to share.

1. Please describe your role on Amazon's TCP team.

2. What has your experience been like working on the TCP team?
    a. What do you feel when working on the TCP?
    b. What do you think about the work of TCP?

3. How would you describe Amazon's relationship with other TCP signatories?
    a. How did those relationships develop?

4. How do you compare Amazon's role in TCP with Global Optimism's role?
    a. What are shared responsibilities between both organizations?
    b. What responsibilities are distinct?
    c. What degree of harmony or tension is there?

5. What is your team's experience working with Global Optimism? Can you share some examples?

6. What strategies has Amazon used to engage and communicate with other Climate Pledge signatories?
    a. Please describe them.

7. What effective practices or processes does Amazon employ to:
    a. Communicate with stakeholders?
    b. Encourage engagement between signatories?
    c. Encourage collaboration and idea sharing?
    d. Evaluate the progress of TCP?

8. With which signatories has Amazon developed a stronger relationship?
    a. How did those relationships develop?
    b. Do you have any hunches about what makes those strong relationships?

9. If you were to visually draw the relationships among Amazon, Global Optimism, and TCP stakeholders, how would the picture look?

10. What criteria did Amazon use to determine which Climate Pledge signatories would receive their investment?
    a. What systems did Amazon employee?

b. What mission did these signatories espouse?

c. With which people in those signatories did Amazon have a good relationship?

11. By what process did Amazon decide to invest resources into certain Climate Pledge signatories over others?

The next set of questions asks about your recollection of Amazon's role in The Climate Pledge over time: TCP's early history and more recent experience. If you can think of specific examples to contextualize your responses, please feel free to share.

12. [Optional question based on tenure of interviewee] What is the early history of The Climate Pledge during its foundation?

13. [Optional question based on tenure of interviewee] Who at Amazon contributed to the early history of The Climate Pledge, and how?

14. How has Amazon's role with TCP shifted over time?
    a. How might it have become stronger?
    b. How might it have become weaker?
    c. What caused the shifts in Amazon's role over time?

15. How has Amazon's role remained the same?

Whereas the previous questions looked into the past, this last set of questions looks forward into the future. These questions explore your perspective about the future of TCP and Amazon's role in its future.

16. What do you believe are Amazon's areas of growth in its relationship to TCP?
    a. What areas of growth does Amazon have in communication and relationships?
    b. What areas of growth does Amazon have in strategic alignment?
    c. What areas of growth does Amazon have in the TCP team's processes and mechanisms?
    d. What areas of growth does Amazon have in the structure of its TCP team?
    e. What areas of growth does Amazon's TCP team have in its rewards, incentives, and metrics?

17. How does Amazon intake feedback from signatories?
    a. What specific communication channels?
    b. What meeting cadences?
    c. What forms?
    d. Which people receive the feedback and from whom?

       e.   How successful and consistent do you observe this feedback process to be?

18. What feedback has your team received from signatories?
    a. What positive feedback?
    b. What constructive feedback?

19. What feedback has your team received from other stakeholders that are not signatories?

20. What do those stakeholders believe are Amazon's areas of growth in relationship to TCP?

21. What is your team's strategic plan for engaging with the TCP network in the near-term future (1-3 years)?

22. What does your team project as Amazon's medium- to long-term future role in The Climate Pledge as the organization matures and accomplishes its mission?

One final question:
23. Is there anything else you would like to share about this subject matter that did not come up in the interview questions?