DEFINING A PARTNERSHIP

THE CONCEPT OF PARTNERSHIP

In examining the concept of partnership, we need to move beyond seeing partnerships through finance, contract management and service-based approaches and adopt a more strategic approach (Roumboutsos & Chiara, 2010). Contemporary preferences for partnerships are deeply embedded and ‘influenced by the institutional context in which they operate’ (Fossati, 2018, p. 523). Partnerships may be pursued for a variety of reasons and generate new forms of organisational, business and relational models. Innovation through partnerships increasingly plays an important role in their governance. Clasen and Bammens (2013) suggest that external collaboration and innovation are more restricted among family controlled firms because these firms rely to a lesser extent on formal contracting as a governance tool in their innovation partnerships. Although they may be seen as bringing social benefits, many organisations seek partnerships out of self-interest and to disrupt the benefits of innovation. The very many forms of relational models and processes found in both formal and informal partnerships, give a sense of extreme fragmentation.
with no single or standard definition; moreover, collaboration in partnerships may often be used interchangeably (Kolbe, Allensworth, Potts-Datema, & White, 2015).

Concepts are generally contested and defined in different ways. The concept of partnership is usually defined as mutually shared goals and relationships. However, collaboration, cooperation, network or an alliance also describes a partnership (Armistead, Pettigrew, & Aves, 2007). Partnerships are often used to improve resources, capabilities and assets through cooperation based on a common purpose, need or problem. A comprehensive and general definition of partnerships includes ‘coproduction of services or functions with different potential roles and relationships’ (Koski, 2015, p. 328). However, the choice of concept can influence the way in which a partnership is made and sustained. For instance, when a partnership is defined as a network, this may suggest there is a greater distance and positioning in the way cooperation and collaboration take place within the partnership. Best practice in these partnerships may unintentionally prevent closer formation and execution in the collaborative and cooperative process. Established partnerships may consist of various groups of mixed actors (Wettenhall, 2003). Table 1 illustrates a variety of partnership logic types in order to give a better understanding of what defines a partnership.

Differences in partnership structures result in considerable multi-level heterogeneity with respect to sustainability. Moreover, club convergence means we should also take into consideration the heterogeneity of individuals within partnerships (Durlauf & Johnson, 1995). Partnerships could be classified according to sectoral, relational, economic and policy objectives; also in terms of scope or as mixed partnerships (Bovaird, 2004), although some scholars question whether mixed partnerships actually merit the term (Wettenhall, 2003). Nevertheless, an innovative relationship between
Table 1. Partnership Logic Types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Specific</th>
<th>Multi-stakeholder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-sector specific</td>
<td>Private–public, cross-sector, private and people living labs, public–private workplace, public-NGO, tri-sector, ‘tripartite co-regulation and private co-regulation’ (Steurer, 2013) and business community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology specific</td>
<td>Technology start-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education specific</td>
<td>Service learning, academic practice policy, research and human-artificial intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit specific</td>
<td>Cause based and public advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government specific</td>
<td>Inter-governmental and intra-governmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic specific</td>
<td>Transboundary (freshwater and ocean), cross-border, development zone, global–local, global–regional, global–national and local enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business specific</td>
<td>Marketing, general, limited liability, transactional, new product development, advisory services, sponsorship, mergers and acquisitions, brokering, joint ventures and capacity development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal specific</td>
<td>Governance, regulatory and cross-jurisdictional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network specific</td>
<td>Cooperative network alliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation specific</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial and disruptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological specific</td>
<td>Biodiversity and sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed specific</td>
<td>Mixed members and mixed logics (integrative, dynamic, reflexive and systemic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation specific</td>
<td>Youth alliance</td>
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</table>

the private and public sectors could be present even when a real partnership does not exist between the two sectors (Khan, Ghalib, & Hossain, 2015). This chapter and the remaining seven chapters in the book will focus primarily on private–public partnerships (PPPs) and cross-sector partnerships (CSPs).
PRIVATE–PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS

PPPs are often defined within infrastructure projects and institutional arrangements for cooperation and financial models (Hodge & Greve, 2007) to generate innovation and alternative approaches with the goal of empowering society and solving societal problems. Bovaird (2004) suggests that PPPs are often sought for the following purposes:

- policy design and planning (e.g. land-use and transportation studies with consultants, where the consultants become a central part of the planning function over a long period);

- policy coordination (e.g. allocation of responsibility for particular policies to specific agencies perhaps through a policy steering group, although typically the final decision will rest in the public sector) or setting priorities;

- policy monitoring (e.g. policy steering group with partners from public, voluntary and private sectors);

- policy evaluation and review (e.g. policy steering group with partners from voluntary and private sectors);

- policy implementation and service delivery in one of three ways: in-house (with external partners in advisory capacity, e.g. management consultants), co-production with external partners (e.g. joint venture for waste disposal) or full externalisation (e.g. selling of social housing stock to housing associations);

- resource mobilisation (e.g. sponsorship or fundraising management); resource management (e.g. ICT or facilities management). (p. 202)
The private sector pursues partnerships by increasing sustainable efficiency, acquiring tacit knowledge and new skills, addressing stakeholder concerns, value creation (Milne, Iyer, & Gooding-Williams, 1996), soft power, risk management, market and non-market strategies, product development and technology development. Many firms also depend on prosperous and healthy societies to achieve solid growth and success. Jamali (2004) suggests that the term PPP is a misapplied and ambiguous concept, given the broad spectrum of possible public and private partnerships it offers. When collaboration and interdependence are the shared concern of both public and private actors, PPPs enter the discourse on public governance (Rhodes, 1997).

Government agencies and private sector organisations share in financing and operating programmes or projects to accomplish important public goals in PPPs. Historically, PPPs were ‘deployed by the federal government in the United States as a tool for stimulating private investment in inner-city infrastructure’ and were ‘key to coordinating federal initiatives in regional economic development’ (Linder, 1999, p. 35) and ‘large-scale public infrastructure’ accomplished ‘through a complex contracting-out scheme’ (Roberts & Siemiatycki, 2015, p. 780). However, greater emphasis should be placed on how governments foster an environment for maximising multi-stakeholder development cooperation (OECD/UNDP, 2016). PPPs may be more attractive to all parties in the United States apart from the public, which is unaware of the specific details and arrangements of partnerships (Riccio, 2014). Similarly, limitations on ‘meaningful community consultations’ in Canada restrict public understanding of the costs and benefits of PPPs (Siemiatycki, 2015, p. 343). Every partnership will benefit from differing resources and partner selection (Wassmer, Pain, & Paquin, 2017).
PPPs are often sought in a variety of types of organisation and governance, including autonomous and integrative (Kivleniece & Quelin, 2012), to generate greater creation of value. However, it is managerial strategies that affect outcomes and values rather than organisational forms (Steijn, Hans-Klijn, & Edelenbos, 2011). Villani, Greco, and Phillips (2017) find that ‘a government-led legal framework is more likely to put the public partners in a position where they can steer the establishment and management of the PPP’ (p. 902). The public sector therefore uses partnerships as an execution mechanism for establishing its mission and goals. Alternatively, the private sector may position and organise itself to ensure competitive delivery of goods and services rather than collaborating in a partnership. It is important to note that just because a private and public sector relationship is formed through interactions, this does not imply a formalised partnership. It is instead the case that a partnership requires a comprehensive relationship which is continuous and institutionally structured.

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

As with PPPs, CSPs are often used to provide public goods and services, also to solve public, economic, social and environmental problems through collaboration. However, the generalisation of partnerships often creates more inequitable challenges than beneficial opportunities. Although much research on CSPs has been incremental (Johnson, Dooley, Hyatt & Hutsen, 2018), Dentoni, Bitzer, and Pascucci’s (2016) findings on the effect of CSPs on corporate capabilities reveal that business initially enhances its ability to sense, interact, learn and change based on stakeholders as business participates in CSPs. Overall, the different dimensions of CSPs mean that the partnership processes require a specific set of skills and competencies to
manage the potentially conflicting interests, perspectives and objectives of partnering organisations (Bitzer, 2017). There is much room for improving the way partnerships operate in silos apart from society. For instance, examining social progress based on social welfare without acknowledging other impacts and outcomes could potentially lead to conflicting or illusory partnership practices (Thiel, 2016). On the other hand, an emphasis on partnerships in resolving social problems may lead to an awareness of formal processes, interactions, knowledge-sharing and relationships, while obscuring informal decision-making relationships and roles.

Effective cross-sector collaborative governance in partnerships requires multiple partners rather than one organisation. Co-management and co-production are concepts used by scholars to demonstrate the importance of collaboration in achieving sustainability goals. Miller and Wyborn (2018) suggest that innovative knowledge is inadequate without inclusive participation from society at large to monitor outcomes. The authors highlight the following three key lessons:

1. Be inclusive in the diversity of participants, the power accorded to them and the processes and objectives of co-production. Ensure that the institutions that enable co-production attend carefully to the credibility, legitimacy and accountability this entails.

2. Acknowledge that co-production is a process of reconfiguring science and its social authority. Such processes require participants to be reflexive about the inherently political nature of producing knowledge in the service of changing social order at local to global scales.

3. Recognise that public engagement, deliberation and debate will shape the content and relevance
of knowledge and its ability to help construct and empower institutions to facilitate sustainability.

However, other scholars suggest that partnerships can be deleterious because of potential job losses, reduced government control and power, profit making and government subsidised private interests in the place of public service in the local community. Non-profit or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may lose their independence in a partnership (Bovaird, 2004), and partnerships may also compete against each other. Clearly, there are many challenges arising from competing interests and priorities among governments, business and society at large. The heterogeneity and complexity of partnerships stem from imbalances within society; partnerships reflect an imbalanced society with a blurring of governance across sectors in partnership formation.

CROSS-CUTTING IMPLICATIONS

Partnerships are processes that are influenced by many actors, trade-offs, trends, capacity development paths, conceptual frameworks, data, development priorities, targets, indicators, policies, governance, implementation strategies and methods. In general, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 plays a critical role in ‘domestic resource mobilisation, assisting developing countries in external resource mobilisation, international cooperation for transfer of environmentally sound technologies, capacity building, policy coherence, data monitoring and multi-stakeholder partnerships’ (Filho et al., 2018, p. 6). SDG 17 focusses further on innovative and collaborative partnerships to provide effective implementation of all the other 16 SDGs. However, reducing inequalities in SDG 10 and developing inclusive institutions in SDG 16 through
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partnerships is a challenge due to the competing tensions of social and environmental problems and social governance (Thiel, 2017b). Revitalising global partnerships will therefore require the revitalising of society.

Leadership in Partnership Performance

Different types of leadership styles and learning may be necessary throughout the partnership lifecycle because new developments in partnerships may open up fragmentation–integration gaps. Specifically, transformational leadership in partnerships will create higher public value through high levels of motivation and morality (Filho et al., 2018). Although there is a plethora of partnership approaches within social movements (such as boycotts) and markets, the state is the most crucial actor (and leader) for ensuring the governing process through partnerships (Edwards, Goodwin, Pember ton, & Woods, 2001). Leadership is therefore an integral component within cross-cutting issues in partnerships. The overarching implication for collaborative partnerships is that someone has to lead. The partnership therefore must come to a consensus on one worldview. Some partnerships may need to evaluate each organisation separately from the partnership, and how each partner converges in a hybrid organisation to form the partnership. The literature on research partnerships in the healthcare industry describe improvements in patient-care outcomes as a result of focussing on gaps in quality and opportunities (Clauser, 2009). Examining the role played by the leadership of the healthcare industry in partnership performance may help close the fragmentation–integration gaps in quality and opportunities that currently prevent rapid adoption and sustainment in partnerships across other industries and sectors.
Risk in Partnership Performance

Responsibly shared risk can potentially address both liability gaps and traceability challenges when either no one is responsible within the partnership or it is unclear who is responsible. For instance, verifying contamination which results from specific industrial operations as against natural contamination remains a work in progress (Frank et al., 2014). Sharing responsible risk within a partnership means distinguishing between risk and uncertainty. Studying partnership processes, mechanisms and activities through an integrated system rather than by means of a narrow intellectual and academic perspective, or according to government and business agendas (Tracey & Creed, in press), will help us understand how partnerships change and reposition society within creating and decreasing public value. This requires an examination of those interdependent contradictions in partnerships that pose complex, irrational and circular phenomena of study (Smith, Erez, Lewis, & Tracey, 2017) and the absorptive capacity of the partnership to recognise the innovative value of new, external information (Zou, Ertug, & George, 2018) in combination with geopolitics.

More importantly is how partnerships are defined as partnership countries, regions, organisations and individuals that often combine resources and other capabilities to gain competitive advantage, with an emphasis here on how knowledge and information is valued and sustained within the partnership globally. Thus, partnerships have broad structures and purposes that span the contexts of PPPs and CSPs. The SDGs provide a good example, due to their focus on benefitting all and not just a few countries, regions, organisations or individuals. Despite the implementation of the SDGs, however, some will dismiss the SDGs as social movements and prefer more narrow interests rather than an inclusive and mutually
beneficial approach for advancing economic, social and environmental development. Black and O’Bright (2016) suggest that private sector actors have become increasingly influential in the new landscape of international development, yet their effects remain ambiguous. Local and central state-owned enterprises illustrate this ambiguity between politics and profit in partnership coordination. Similarly,

*very few (Local Enterprise Partnerships) LEPs could be considered as having achieved the truly collaborative or institutional phase, in which the LEP creates its own set of values, and to have developed metrics that satisfied all LEP leaders and all parent organisations.* (Liddle, 2018, p. 669)

A lack of resources, statutory powers and the right to impose sanctions will significantly impede future partnership progress. Consequently, it is not surprising that partnerships are formed within pre-determined operating structures and environments, such as infrastructure development and other context-specific development projects. Pre-determined operating structures and environments come packaged with actors arguing for control over other actors, persuading them to accept and conform to their logic through conflicting, contradictory and idealised worldviews, while simultaneously labelling their own criteria as effective and adaptive governance. New partnerships simply adapt to these external environments and structures, without examining the uncertainty and risk of the final outcomes. Thus, partnerships are synchronous and need the development of multi-dimensional measurement and assessment to better understand gaps within the fragmentation–integration dichotomy.

In order to adequately assess partnership performance, a synchronous assessment of the valuation and screening process is required for the natural and artificial environments
in which they operate. Connecting data, ‘issues-linkages and strategic bargains’ (Pattberg & Stripple, 2008, p. 385) from each partner to social and environmental partnership performance and to key performance metrics for developing partnership capital through social and human capital may improve the management of tradeoffs in resources and outcomes. The valuation and screening process should include examination of the social, economic, political and environmental domains and external structure, sectors, functions, activities and processes for addressing partnership performance systematically. Partnerships contain ‘obligatory passage points’ (OPPs) (Callon, 1986) for actors to establish and standardise the framework, to seek and to maintain, gain or deny strategic advantage by controlling or contesting the meaning and control of these OPPs (Clegg, Geppert, & Hollinshead, 2018) with and against other actors with conflicting world views. Thus, public benefits and public value creation will be confined to ensuring effective private, public and societal governance mechanisms throughout the partnership process and system. Caiado, Filho, Quelhas, de Matos, and Avilia (2018) suggest a way forward through further research into new assessment mechanisms for the SDGs, through innovation, education and information, monitoring and implementation. Often, scholars will refer to ‘legitimacy’ as a principle obstacle to furthering examination of conflict. However, institutions and people have their own forms of logic and rationale that change within a given context and are often difficult to ascertain.