



sustainability through partnerships

Capitalizing on Collaboration



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Prepared by
Barbara Gray and
Jenna P. Stites

The issues we face are so big and the targets are so challenging that we cannot do it alone. When you look at any issue, such as food or water scarcity, it is very clear that no individual institution, government or company can provide the solution.¹

PAUL POLMAN, CEO, UNILEVER

¹ Confino, J. April 24, 2012. Unilever's Paul Polman: challenging the corporate status quo. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/paul-polman-unilever-sustainable-living-plan>

Collaboration between different types of organizations can produce previously unimagined solutions. This report shows how such innovation develops.

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Prepared by Dr. Barbara Gray and Ms. Jenna P. Stites, The Pennsylvania State University

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Dear Reader,

Collaboration is one of the keys for unlocking sustainability. No single organization or sector has the knowledge or resources to “go it alone.” Leaders from all sectors of society agree that solving sustainability challenges will require unparalleled cooperation. This report is a comprehensive review of what we know about partnering for sustainability.

Researchers Dr. Barbara Gray and Ms. Jenna Stites of The Pennsylvania State University have synthesized prior research on the challenges businesses face in partnering with others. I believe that both managers and researchers working in this critical area will find this report helpful.

This report outlines four factors affecting partnership outcomes: drivers, motivations, partner characteristics and process issues. Managers will likely find the report’s concrete guidance on choosing partners and managing process helpful (Chapter 3, pp. 36-49). The authors also provide broad recommendations for positive outcomes (Chapter 4). I also encourage readers to consult the 150 different partnerships examples, sortable by issue and industry (Appendix F, available online). Researchers may also be interested in the research gaps identified in Appendix E and the different theoretical perspectives provided in Appendix C.

I am sincerely grateful for the stellar guidance provided throughout the research process by the team’s academic advisor, Dr. Jonathan Doh (Villanova

University), and its guidance committee: Grete Bridgewater (Canadian Pacific Railway), John Coyne, (Unilever Canada), David Dougall (BlackBerry), Brenda Goehring (BC Hydro), Peter MacConnachie (Suncor Energy), Matthew McCulloch (Pembina Institute), Chris McDonell (Tembec), John Page (Telus), Jane Sadler Richards (LANXESS) and Georgina Wainwright-Kemdirim (Industry Canada). We also appreciate the feedback provided on the draft report by NGO and business leaders. I believe the development of this report represents a model of collaboration, assembling leaders from research and practice.

This systematic review is one of many that form the backbone of NBS. The topics are chosen by our Leadership Council, a group of multi-sector organizations leading in sustainability whose names you will find at the end of this report. This group meets annually to identify the sustainability topics most salient to business. Identifying how businesses can collaborate to achieve sustainability goals was near the top of their list for 2013. The reports from all their past priorities are available freely on our website at nbs.net.



Dr. Tima Bansal
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Executive Summary

This systematic review synthesizes knowledge on multi-sector partnerships for sustainability. The review set out to address one major research question and four sub-questions:

What best practices enable firms to collaborate with other organizations to advance sustainable business?

1. *What **different forms** do collaborative partnerships take, and how do these forms affect the possible outcomes achieved?*
2. *What practices help to **reconcile stakeholders' conflicting views** about sustainability and promote consensus within partnerships?*
3. *How should partnership success be **evaluated**?*
4. *What is the role of the broader **societal context** (e.g. institutional environment) in shaping the formation, operation and success of these partnerships for sustainability?*

To address these questions, we reviewed and coded the key content of more than 275 articles published in a subset of management and public policy academic journals between 2000 and 2012 along with some books and recent practitioner-oriented reports. The report's key findings provide a synthesis of this extensive literature on partnerships for sustainability, which has grown significantly during the review period.

The report defines and categorizes the various types of partnerships for sustainability, which vary according to the sectors involved (i.e. business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government and community). The most common partnerships covered in the report are those between businesses and NGOs. As more sectors become involved, the complexity of the partnerships increases, with the most complex involving all four sectors in the partnership type called collaborative governance. While sustainability has many meanings, it is defined here as improvements to the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends while satisfying the needs of all stakeholders.

Our primary findings include a model of four factors that influence partnership outcomes:

- external drivers
- partner motivations
- partner and partnership characteristics
- process issues

Key external drivers include (1) social perceptions, (2) expectations and preferences, (3) technological developments, (4) concerns about globalization, (5) the regulatory environment and (6) the efficacy of governments. Different combinations of drivers may motivate members of different sectors to form partnerships. (See pp. 28-31.)

For business-NGO partnerships specifically, each partner evaluates the utility of partnering on the basis of several motivations, including legitimacy-, competency-, resource- and society- oriented motivations. Matching these motivations with key partner and partnership characteristics enables each partner to make a business case for partnering. (See pp. 31-36.)

Eight key partner or partnership characteristics are important for choosing a partner and have the potential to impact partnership outcomes. These are: (1) a potential partner's resource profile, (2) a potential partner's previous partnership experience, (3) the type of NGO, (4) representation of stakeholders, (5) power dynamics, (6) cultural fit, (7) time horizons for the activities and (8) a potential partner's reputation. (See pp. 36-40.)

Selecting the right partner and partnership design does not, however, guarantee a successful outcome from partnering. As complements to partner and partnership characteristics, nine key process issues are important for achieving optimal partnership outcomes. These process issues include: (1) exploring differences, (2) creating a shared vision, (3) agreeing on norms, (4) building trust, (5) handling conflict, (6) reaching consensus, (7) devising accountability criteria, (8) sharing power and ensuring voice and (9) cultivating effective leadership. (See pp. 41-49.)

Finally, the report identifies key partnership outcomes for five different audiences: businesses, NGOs, governments, communities and the environment as a whole. A key finding regarding outcomes is that partnerships are not necessarily the same as collaborations. Achieving collaboration means reaching optimal outcomes for all parties. Finding such outcomes requires careful attention to the process issues identified above. (See pp. 49-54.)

The report offers (pp. 64-71) several recommendations for all partners and specific recommendations for businesses, NGOs, governments and communities respectively. The following recommendations pertain to all partners:

- Adopt a problem-centric rather than a firm-centric model of stakeholders.
- Frame the partnership as a learning process.
- Construct fair processes and manage conflicts.
- Don't expect to come up with a quick solution.
- Ensure voice for all participants.
- Set evaluation criteria.
- Allow time for representatives' constituencies to review and ratify agreements.
- Develop leaders competent in partnership skills.

Three specific recommendations are proposed for businesses:

- Evaluate whether you've selected the correct partner.
- Consult a wide array of stakeholders.
- Involve reputable stakeholders early.

Overall, this report represents an important step toward integrating the recent research on multi-sector partnerships for sustainability. The findings are of both practical and theoretical importance, as indicated by the recommendations and questions for future research. This report will be helpful to practitioners just getting started with collaboration as well as those who are trying to learn from or improve previous or existing collaborations. The report will also be helpful to academics looking to contribute to theory development about sustainability partnerships.

chapter 1: introduction

Use of partnerships to address sustainability challenges has grown exponentially — but not all are successful. This report assesses the state of current knowledge to identify best practices for collaboration.

In the last 15 years, there has been an exponential increase in the use of cross-sector partnerships to address sustainability across the globe. These partnerships come in many forms, ranging from alliances between businesses and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to networks of small rural farmers working with micro-financiers, to government-led efforts to manage natural resources or design transportation infrastructure, to industry-level, norm-setting bodies designed as substitutes for government intervention. Organizations have many motivations for linking with others to address sustainability challenges. For businesses, the desire to enhance their reputations for corporate social responsibility (CSR) is critical, along with finding leaner ways to produce and reducing their environmental footprint. For governments, partnerships are becoming the governance structure of the future. For NGOs, the challenge involves taking up the role that, in many cases, governments are no longer able to fulfill because of shrinking resources or weakened social mandates. For communities, their paramount desires are to escape poverty, eliminate human rights abuses, ensure sustained natural resources and enhance their overall health and well-being.

These multi-sector partnerships draw on diverse competencies of partners from many sectors to tackle problems that individual organizations (or even whole sectors) cannot solve or cannot solve as well, working independently.² Because of their potential to combine resources, skills and knowledge from a wide range of stakeholders to address the challenges of creating a sustainable planet, these multi-sector partnerships have been called the “collaboration

² Gray, 1989; Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006; McGuire, 2006.

³ Austin, 2000a: 44.

⁴ Vurro, Dacin & Perrini, 2010: 40.

⁵ Alter & Hage, 1993: 12, cited in Selsky & Parker, 2005: 849.

paradigm of the 21st century,”³ the “new organizational zeitgeist in dealing with societal issues”⁴ and a “stunning evolutionary change in institutional forms of governance.”⁵

Overview of the Systematic Review’s Purpose, Methodology and Findings

In this Network for Business Sustainability (NBS) review, we provide a systematic review of two related but distinct literatures that address the evolution of cross-sector partnerships for sustainability: the management and the public policy literatures. We sought to answer the following question: *What are best practices for firms to collaborate with other organizations to advance sustainable business?*

Four additional sub-questions were also addressed:

- What different forms do collaborative partnerships take, and how do these forms affect the possible outcomes achieved?
- What practices help to reconcile stakeholders’ conflicting views about sustainability and promote consensus within partnerships?
- How should partnership success be evaluated?
- What is the role of the broader societal context (e.g. institutional environment) in shaping the formation, operation and success of these partnerships for sustainability?

Since 2000, the management literature has seen a dramatic increase in research on cross-sector partnerships among businesses and NGOs, from only four articles in 2000 to 25 in 2012. In the public policy and voluntary sector literature, there is a similar increase in articles reporting the use of partnerships as a form of collaborative governance. Figure 1 shows the increases in partnership articles published per year in these two literatures. For a detailed description of our methodology for the systemic review, see Appendix A. Overall, we draw on literature from 10 different theoretical streams (see Appendix C for a brief summary of each of these theoretical perspectives). Our aim in this report is to synthesize the findings

of these two literatures in order to capture the state-of-the-art knowledge about the utility of cross-sector partnerships for promoting greater sustainability across the globe.

Table 1, Partnership Articles Generated by Systematic Review, shows the number of articles initially found for each body of literature and the number that were retained for review based on relevance. The table also lists the number of additional pertinent articles, books and reports identified during the review process. Appendix D contains a table of all the articles generated in the first phase of the search process and catalogues them by topic, method and relevance for the review.

Figure 1

PARTNERSHIP ARTICLES (2000-2012)

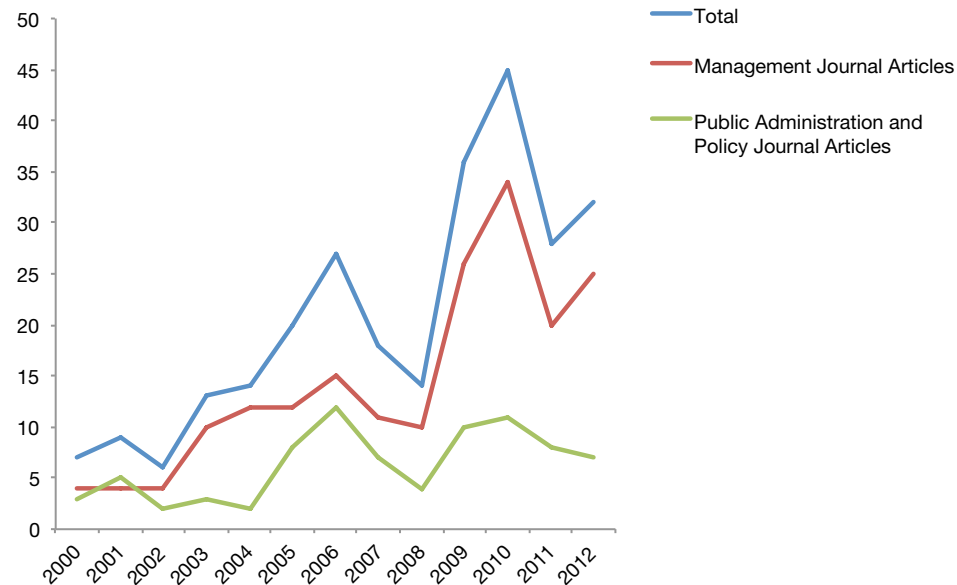


Table 1

PARTNERSHIP ARTICLES GENERATED BY SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

	MANAGEMENT LITERATURE	PUBLIC POLICY LITERATURE	OTHER LITERATURES
# Articles initially identified	242	155	
# Articles retained for review	190	86	
# Articles identified during review			39
# Books/ Reports identified			21
# Consulting/ Think tank reports identified			18

Content and Organization of the Report

The partnerships described in this report vary considerably in range, scope and size, but constitute a major shift in the way businesses define and execute their corporate social responsibilities,⁶ in the way governments govern to ensure the public good,⁷ in the way non-government organizations garner attention to pressing social problems⁸ and in how members of civil societies band together to improve their wellbeing.⁹

⁶ Waddock, 1989; Matten & Crane, 2005; Mirvis & Googins, 2006; Palazzo & Scherer, 2008; Bhattacharya, Korschun & Sen, 2009; Pelozo & Falkenberg, 2009; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009.

⁷ Salamon, 2002; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2005; Sorenson & Torfing, 2011.

⁸ Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010a; Yaziji & Doh, 2009.

⁹ Ashman, 2001; Pew Partnership for Civic Change, 2001; Wheeler, McKague, Thomson, Davies, Medalye & Prada, 2005.

¹⁰ Utting & Zammitt, 2009; Banerjee, 2007; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010b; Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005; Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007.

The report examines the drivers stimulating this exponential increase in cross-sector partnerships, the variety of partnership types, the intended and actual outcomes, and the process dynamics that contribute to partnership success or failure. However, some of the research we reviewed was critical of partnerships and cautioned against viewing them solely in the service of markets (e.g. as an alternative to regulation).¹⁰ With this critique in mind, we stress the crucial ongoing role for multi-sector partnerships in achieving sustainability goals that meet the needs of all four major partners: businesses, NGOs, governments and communities. Our recommendations are designed to ensure that partnerships add value for all involved.

Our report is organized as follows:

- Chapter II explores multi-sector collaboration in terms of each body of literature we reviewed and concludes with a general model of multi-sector partnerships.
- Chapter III drills down into the dynamics of partnerships. It differentiates partners' sustainability orientations and presents a spectrum of partnership activities. This chapter also introduces a Model of Factors Affecting Partnership Outcomes, that describes the drivers that promote partnership creation, the partners' motivations, partnership characteristics, the processes of interacting and the outcomes of the partnership. Two case studies illustrate these frameworks.

- Chapter IV concludes that partnerships are here to stay and offers recommendations for each sector on how to maximize their potential for realizing outputs, outcomes and social impacts, consistent with sustainability objectives.
- Appendix A provides greater detail on the methodology used for this systematic review.
- Appendix B reviews several definitions of sustainability found in the literature.
- Appendix C summarizes the theoretical perspectives reflected in the articles.
- Appendix D catalogues all the articles reviewed for this report in a spreadsheet format.
- Appendix E synthesizes the gaps in the literature and areas for future research.
- Appendix F provides a table summarizing each partnership case described in the literature in sufficient detail to identify the focal issues, key outcomes and learnings.

Definition of Sustainability

Since this review address partnerships for sustainability, it is important to define what is meant by this term. Countless definitions of sustainability are available. One general definition stresses the importance of bringing industrial systems into harmony with nature by balancing use and regeneration of resources and striving to preserve the lives of humans, other species and future generations.¹¹ However,

because sustainability is “a broad and evolving construct that defies a universally agreed definition,”¹² understanding this variety is important for potential partners. Their definitions of sustainability will influence how they define their orientation to problems and their motivations for engaging in partnerships in the first place. Thus, partners’ definitions of sustainability will affect the ease or difficulty with which they find common ground.

Explicit links have also been made between sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR has traditionally been defined as encompassing “the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.”¹³ Additionally, so-called Base-of-the-Pyramid advocates argue that improvements to the livelihoods and well-being of the world’s poor are also critical to sustainability.¹⁴ Because recent research suggests that the meanings of CSR and sustainability have begun to merge, we use the terms interchangeably in this report.¹⁵

Synthesizing these various approaches, we define sustainability as improvements to the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends while satisfying the needs of all stakeholders.¹⁶ Additionally, drawing on the Natural Step framework, we identify four basic conditions that help to operationalize our definition of sustainability. These conditions, depicted

¹¹ Senge, Lichtenstein, Kaeufer, Bradbury & Carroll, 2007.

¹² Talwar & Haugh, 2010: 385

¹³ Carroll, 1979: 500.

¹⁴ Prahalad, 2004; Hart, 2005.

¹⁵ Montiel, 2008.




¹⁶ Building on Brown, 2002.

in Figure 2, The Natural Step's Conditions for Sustainability, must be met "to maintain the essential natural resources, structures and functions that sustain human society"¹⁷ and the ability of all human beings to meet their basic needs. For more detail on different definitions of sustainability, see Appendix B.


Figure 2

THE NATURAL STEP'S CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing...

-  ...concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust,
-  ...concentrations of substances produced by society,
-  ...degradation by physical means,

and, in that society...

-  ...people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

¹⁷ The Natural Step, 2013.

chapter 2: the nature of multi-sector partnerships

Multi-sector partnerships can take many forms. To understand the diversity of partnerships, we look to two fields of research. We then classify different types of partnerships on a continuum, showing increasing levels of complexity — and potential.

Defining Multi-Sector Collaborative Partnerships

Multi-sector partnerships “are generally defined as initiatives where public-interest entities, private sector companies and/or civil society organizations enter into an alliance to achieve a common practical purpose, pool core competencies, and share risks, responsibilities, resources, costs and benefits.”¹⁸ Partnerships are *cross-sectoral* to the extent that they involve partners from at least two, but possibly all four, of the following sectors: business, non-governmental organizations, government and communities or civil society.

Some definitions confound the terms *collaboration* and *partnership* by using them interchangeably. Although partnerships are often referred to as collaborations, we believe it is important to distinguish between these terms because not all partnerships satisfy the more rigorous definitions of collaboration or achieve collaborative outcomes, and, as a result, the term collaboration has become “hopelessly ambiguous.”¹⁹ The essential components of a rigorous definition of collaboration include the following:

- It involves decisions and/or actions on issues related to a problem domain (such as energy, AIDS treatment, food safety, etc.).²⁰
- It is an interactive process that uses shared rules, norms and structures.²¹
- It involves formal and information negotiations²² and consensus-building.²³
- Trade-offs are necessary in order to produce joint gains that create value for all parties.²⁴
- Partners bring different competencies and explore “how what they know can productively and usefully be juxtaposed with the expertise of others.”²⁵
- Partners assume joint risks and responsibilities for the outcomes of their joint efforts.²⁶

The key is that collaboration can be either a process or an outcome with specific process characteristics. See Chapter III for a detailed discussion of these process aspects and partners’ motivations for engaging in partnerships.

¹⁸ Utting & Zammit, 2009: 40.

¹⁹ Donahue, 2010: S151.

²⁰ Wood and Gray, 1991: 146.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Thomson, Pery & Miller, 2009.

²³ Ansell & Gash, 2008.

²⁴ Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a.

²⁵ Michaels, 2009: 998.

²⁶ Gray, 1989.

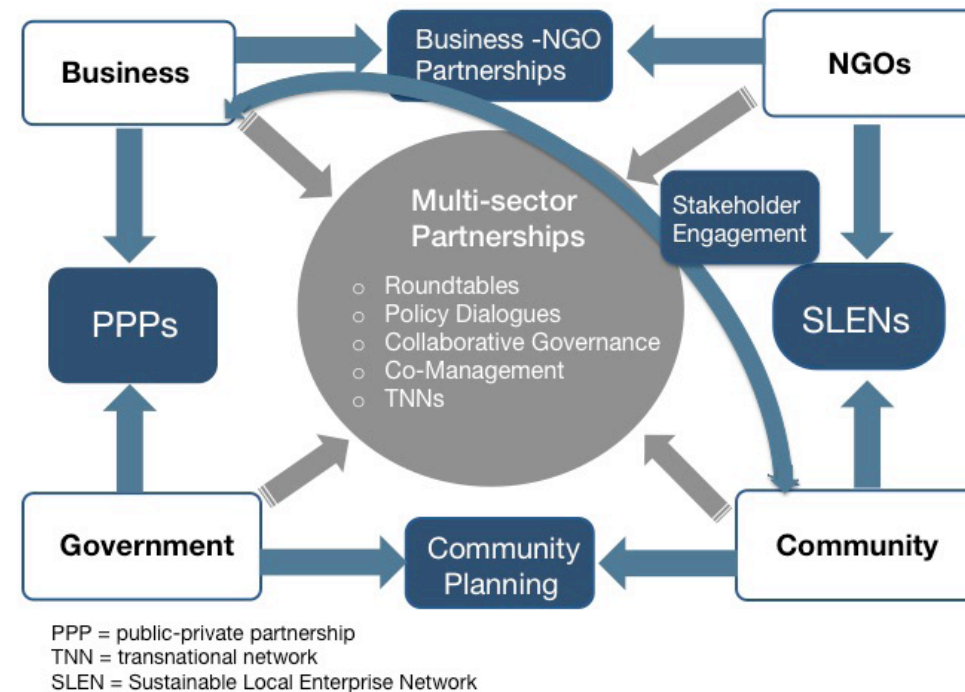
Mapping Partners and Types of Collaboration

Multi-sector partnerships include partners from three or more different sectors: business, non-governmental organizations, governments, and civil society or community. As Figure 3, Partnerships by Sector, shows, cross-sector partnerships can form between any two of these sectors. For example, when business and government join forces, their venture is called a

public-private partnership. When businesses and NGOs link up, these alliances are known as business-NGO partnerships. When NGOs team up with civil society members, these partnerships have been called SLENs (Sustainable Local Enterprise Networks).²⁷ Businesses also engage directly with communities (as in stakeholder engagement forums), but because building these relationships is often difficult for businesses (because they lack organizational partners for routine, ongoing and possibly contractual exchanges),²⁸ NGOs often broker or serve as liaisons between businesses and communities.

Figure 3

PARTNERSHIPS BY SECTOR



²⁷ Wheeler et al., 2005.

²⁸ Weber, 2009: 670.

When three or more sectors participate in a partnership, this constitutes a multi-sector partnership (circle in the centre of Figure 3). For example, government may engage in partnerships with civil society and NGOs in what has been termed *collaborative governance* — a means of augmenting its own governance efforts. Other multi-sector partnerships include policy dialogues designed to recommend policies for governments and roundtables (such as the Soya Roundtable or the Marine Stewardship Council) in which multiple businesses, NGOs and communities explore the development of sustainable standards for producing a commodity.

In some cases, a partnership may begin between two sectors but then branch out to include other sectors and additional members from the original sectors. For example, Honey Care Kenya began as an alliance between an NGO and local farmers in Kenya whom it trained to become beekeepers. As Honey Care Kenya grew, the NGO sought the help of a business entrepreneur to underwrite the endeavour, which has now grown into a very profitable business that sells honey on the global market and is expanding its operations to several other African countries.²⁹

Since our literature search reviewed articles from the public policy literature (which tended to explore collaborative governance and multi-sector partnerships) and the business literature (which focused more heavily on business–NGO partnerships), we explore each of these areas separately in the next two sections, starting

²⁹ Wheeler et al., 2005.

³⁰ Provan & Kenis, 2008: 231.

³¹ Waddell & Khangram, 2007: 262.

³² Hendriks, 2009: 355.

³³ Donahue, 2010: S151.

with collaborative governance, and then synthesize our findings in subsequent sections.

Collaborative Governance

Within public arenas the role of government has been changing. Many government agencies have been expected to “do more with less.” Additionally, as the nature of problems changes and often becomes more complex, government agents find that to implement public policy, they need competencies that lie beyond the scope of their agencies. Consequently, a new form of governance has emerged, which is generally referred to as “collaborative governance,” “network governance” or “new public management.” Governance is itself a term worth defining. One definition is “the use of institutions and resources to coordinate and control joint action across the network as a whole.”³⁰ Another is “a set of legitimate and authoritative relationships and processes that define public goals and stimulate collective action to achieve them.”³¹ Put more simply, governance involves the processes of managing the delivery of public good.

Several definitions of collaborative governance have been offered in the literature. Hendriks defines it as “the coordination of interdependent actors from public, private and societal sectors for the purposes of developing and implementing public policy.”³² Another definition refers to “joint efforts by public and private actors, each wielding a degree of discretion, to advance a goal that is conventionally considered governmental.”³³ Ansell and

Gash explain it as “a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.”³⁴ A term used synonymously with *collaborative governance* is *co-management*, which refers to “a situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define, and guarantee amongst themselves a fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements, and responsibilities for a given territory or set of natural resources.”³⁵

A key idea present in all of these definitions is that non-governmental stakeholders are participating in the work of government. Also inherent in descriptions of collaborative governance is the intention of developing a more comprehensive understanding of the issue or problem under consideration than government could achieve on its own.³⁶ And, as noted in the more general discussion of collaboration presented above, finding consensus, or at least striving to do so, is at the heart of collaborative governance. It is one of six criteria identified by Ansell and Gash³⁷ as essential for collaborative governance:

1. The forum [partnership] is initiated by public agencies or institutions.
2. Participants in the forum include non-state actors.
3. Participants engage directly in decision making and are not merely “consulted” by public agencies.

4. The forum is formally organized and meets collectively.
5. The forum aims to make decision by consensus (even if consensus is not achieved in practice).
6. The focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management.

Although government agencies must retain the formal authority for any decisions taken in collaborative governance forums, non-government actors are expected to assume serious deliberative roles and often play a key role in implementing any decision taken. Such forums can operate at local, regional, state, national and even global levels, although decisions taken at the global or transnational level can only be voluntary since they have no force of law or executive authority backing them up.

Collaborative governance can be used to address many different areas of government, from education to transportation to water management. One area particularly suited to this type of governance is the management of natural resources. The suitability of collaborative processes for managing this type of public good (called co-management) stems from the highly interconnected relationships among stakeholders concerned about natural resources— from those who live on the land (e.g. indigenous and First Nations peoples), to those who extract the resources for a livelihood (e.g. loggers, farmers and irrigators), to those who enjoy natural resources for recreation (e.g.

³⁴ Ansell & Gash, 2008: 544.

³⁵ Borrini-Feyerabend, Farvar, Nguingiri, & Ndangang, 2000: 1.

³⁶ Gray, 1989; McGuire, 2006; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000.

³⁷ Ansell & Gash, 2008.

hikers and anglers), to those who advocate for their preservation (e.g. conservation groups). Often, these parties find themselves at odds with one another, so collaborative governance serves as a dispute resolution process.³⁸

At local and regional levels, co-management efforts may be organized at the watershed or forest level, such as Canada's Great Bear Rainforest negotiations (see insert at right). Other co-management efforts may be more site-specific. At the national level in the United States, notable examples of co-management include efforts at regulatory negotiation by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other U.S. federal agencies. At the transnational level, the collaborations may address truly global issues such as climate change or plastic pollution of the oceans. At this level, the boundaries between business-NGO partnerships and collaborative governance initiatives may begin to blur, since collaborative forums such as the Soya Roundtable or the Sustainable Forestry Initiative attempt to develop voluntary norms and standards to "govern" the behavior of businesses, governments and members of civil society. A key expectation associated with collaborative governance is that compliance with the agreed-upon policies and practices will be substantial, since participants were given a voice in their creation.³⁹ McGuire⁴⁰ reported that considerable new legislation in the United States required that collaborative processes be used for policy implementation.

Great Bear Rainforest Negotiation

"The Great Bear Rainforest is a lush coastal wilderness... until recently... under threat from industrial logging. After waves of local and international protests, discussions were held by the Government of British Columbia (BC), representatives of indigenous First Nations groups, environmental organisations and forest industry leading to landmark decisions in 2006 and 2009. A series of conservation agreements committed to protecting 70 per cent of the natural levels of old-growth forests, as well as logging controls, recognition of the rights of First Nations inhabitants and measures to improve community well-being" (Greenpeace, 2012).

A useful way to map types of collaborative governance is to think of them as falling on a continuum of government involvement. At one end, governments "play a minimal role in directing the economy, stepping in only when markets fail," while at the other end, decisions and their implementation are handled within a governmental bureaucracy.⁴¹ Collaborative governance would fall in the middle, between these two extremes. See Figure 4, Position of Collaborative Governance along a Continuum of Government Involvement.

³⁸ Borri-Feyerabend et al., 2000; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000; Lewicki, Gray & Elliott, 2003.

³⁹ Van de Kerkhof, 2006.

⁴⁰ McGuire, 2006.

⁴¹ Regéczi, 2005: 208.

Figure 4

POSITION OF COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE ALONG A CONTINUUM OF GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT



Business–NGO Partnerships

A strong business case has been made for business involvement in partnerships for sustainability. By far, the bulk of the articles we unearthed in this review addressed business–NGO partnerships, although they didn't necessarily involve only one business and one NGO (dyadic); many involved more than one business and/or multiple NGOs. A global survey of 766 CEOs in 100 countries revealed that “seventy-eight percent believe that companies should engage in industry collaborations and multi-stakeholder partnerships to address development goals.”⁴² So, for many scholars and sustainability experts, the question of whether business should be (or needs to be) involved in partnerships is moot.⁴³ The more important questions are, “how and to what effect?”⁴⁴

⁴² Lacy, Cooper, Hayward, & Neuberger, 2010: 11.f

⁴³ Zammit, 2003.

⁴⁴ Zadek, 2008: 379.

⁴⁵ Utting & Zammit, 2009: 43.

TYPES OF BUSINESS–NGO PARTNERSHIPS

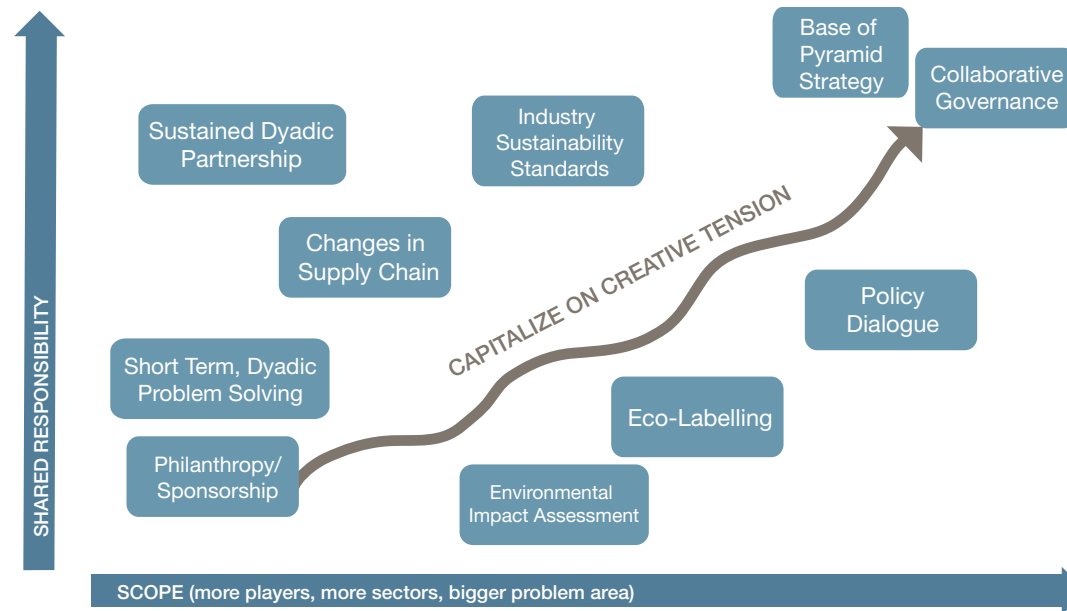
Business–NGO partnerships can take many forms. As one article noted, partnerships reflect a heterogeneous set of activities, “with some initiatives resembling conventional forms of philanthropy while others are characterized by more substantive forms of multi-stakeholder engagement.”⁴⁵ Figure 5, Types of Business–NGO Partnerships, offers a graphic representation of several of these types. The types are arrayed along two axes. The X axis displays the scope of the partnership, which increases with the number of players and sectors involved and the size of the problem arena (e.g. local, regional, national, global). The Y axis displays the degree of shared ownership and responsibility exhibited by the partners. A brief explanation of each partnership type appears below.

Philanthropy or sponsorship is the simplest form of partnership, in which a business offers a direct financial contribution to a charity or an NGO; the contribution could include joint marketing. Typically, this form of partnership involves a single business and a single NGO. For example, Timberland donated 50 pairs of boots to the NGO City Year for a City Year fundraiser event.⁴⁶ *Environmental impact assessment* occurs when a business considers other stakeholders' input on its plans for a new facility or site. The degree of stakeholder involvement varies, from offering one-time input to providing substantial input as the plans unfold.

Business might also consult NGOs for *short-term problem-solving* on a single sustainability issue or might develop a more *sustained dyadic partnership* with one NGO. For instance, Dupont and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) teamed up to work together on nanoparticle development. Either short-term problem solving or a sustained dyadic partnership might generate *changes in the firm's supply chain* as were evident when Loblaw teamed up with World Wildlife Fund to develop a line of sustainable seafood. *Eco-labelling* takes this a step further in that several firms within an industry adopt standards for labelling certain

Figure 5

TYPES OF BUSINESS-NGO PARTNERSHIPS



⁴⁶ Austin, 2000b.

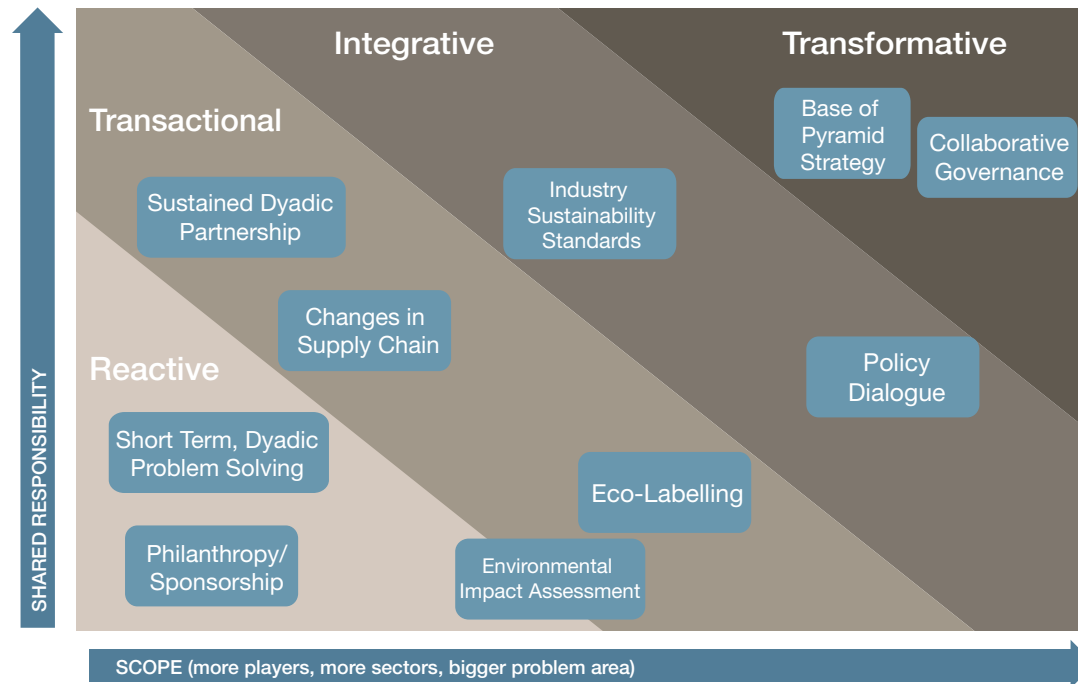
products as sustainable. *Policy dialogues* (such as Canada's Royal Commissions) involve stakeholders in discussions with government to recommend legislation or regulations. Similar discussions among industries and NGOs are convened to develop voluntary *industry sustainability standards*, such as the chemical industry's Responsible Care Initiative or the Canadian Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute's (CPCI's) new Sustainable Plant Program, which set sustainability standards for its industry's plants. From a business standpoint, *Base-of-the-Pyramid strategies* are partnerships in which businesses work closely with income-poor communities around the globe to develop new sustainable business opportunities that are locally embedded and generate value for all the partners. Finally, *collaborative governance*, as described earlier, involves businesses and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of governmental activities.

Sustainability Continuum

Many researchers have proposed typologies or continua to capture differing levels of commitment by businesses to Sustainability or to partnerships designed to promote those ends. Most continua had four levels, although some only had three, and a few had five. Almost all the continua sought to reflect increasing levels of business involvement in partnering with their stakeholders, and many built on each other. Austin and Seitanidi's 2012 proposal represented a synthesis of the four-part models, ranging from philanthropic to transactional to integrative to transformational. In Figure 6, Sustainability Continuum, we overlay these gradations on the types of partnerships we presented in Figure 5 to reflect the increasing levels of responsibility and complexity that partners face as they move from partnerships in the lower left to the upper right of the figure. Achieving successful partnerships at the upper right of the continuum requires that partners learn to capitalize on the creative tensions inherent in the partnership. The different levels also help to distinguish partnership outcomes, with those focused on reputation and image in the bottom left and those with wider societal impact in the top right. We expand on these ideas in Chapter III when we discuss "Process Issues" and "Outcomes."

Figure 6

SUSTAINABILITY CONTINUUM



Partnerships in the lower left-hand corner largely represent threat-induced, compliance or charity-driven responses. In this level of response, Sustainability activities involve providing welfare to society by responding to government regulations or by providing charitable giving. The second level in the continuum represents largely transactional Sustainability partnerships, where the primary motive for business is improving profitability or market share. The third level captures integrative Sustainability partnerships, in which businesses move beyond bottom-line considerations

to consider how to balance those considerations with social and ecological concerns. Finally, partnerships in the upper-right area of the figure represent a final type in which other key stakeholders are involved in sustained interactions designed to agree on and enact Sustainability objectives that are equally responsive to all partners' needs.⁴⁷ This approach most likely refers to what others have called transformational⁴⁸ or transformative⁴⁹ engagement. Businesses that respond at this level not only embed Sustainability in every aspect of their operations and tie it into their strategic

⁴⁷ Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003.

⁴⁸ Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans, 2010.

⁴⁹ Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a

objectives⁵⁰ but are also interested in managing and integrating stakeholder expectations,⁵¹ and their partnership efforts empower and give equal voice to stakeholders and communities with whom they partner. Vurro, Dacin and Perrini⁵² explain that a firm operating at an empowerment-driven level might “act as brokers between governments and communities, through participative leadership styles and governance models aimed at mobilizing local capacity around a social mission, that is, the improvement of local conditions.”

The stages of the continuum appear to be in a chronological order, implying that they represent chronological steps. While firms that are new to sustainability partnerships may likely begin with transactional types of partnerships and may progress along the continuum as they gain experience and enjoy

success in their partnership efforts, a firm doesn't have to start on the left and move through the levels stepwise. A firm could enter into partnerships anywhere along the continuum and skip levels as it became more involved in Sustainability. Partnerships often evolve by means of a “‘reactive-turned-proactive’ strategy, where pressures from NGO activists lead the company to go from resistance and mere compliance to strategic actions.”⁵³ However, as Van Marrewijk et al. wisely observe,⁵⁴ the upper right levels do appear later in a firm's development “because they have to wait for the emergence of the parts that they will then integrate.” In other words, considerable previous learning and investment is necessary to reach the final stage of the continuum.

⁵⁰ Valente, 2012.

⁵¹ Bhattacharya et al., 2009.

⁵² Vurro et al., 2010: 48.

⁵³ Perez-Aleman & Sandilands, 2008: 30.

⁵⁴ Van Marrewijk et al., 2003: 97.

chapter 3: model of cross-sector partnerships

Four factors contribute to partnership outcomes. We review each of the factors to understand the growth of partnerships and how best to achieve positive outcomes. Two case studies illuminate these ideas. We close by representing the Space of Optimal Agreements.

Overview of Model of Cross-sector Partnerships

The study of cross-sector partnerships can be approached from many angles, from explaining their origins to understanding their dynamics to predicting their outcomes. Because of the complexity of partnerships, accurately predicting their outcomes may not be possible, but the existing literature reveals four key factors that greatly influence partnership outcomes. In this chapter, we introduce a model of these four factors — drivers, partner motivations, partnership characteristics and process issues — and describe each in detail. The model, depicted in Figure 7, Factors Affecting Partnership Outcomes, shows a progression of influence, suggesting that each factor influences outcomes either directly or through other intermediate factors. Below, we consider each factor in depth and explain its relationship to outcomes. We end this chapter with case studies to illustrate how these factors work together to influence outcomes.

Drivers of Sustainability Partnership Formation

“Contextual factors include a wide range of variables, such as: regional, national and local environments; economic, political, cultural and social conditions; linkage with international bodies and with networks promoting partnerships; the presence or absence of intermediary organisations and/or key individuals [...] that exert directionality and impetus towards partnership solutions. All these factors interlink and overlap in complex and dynamic ways; and they inevitably have effects on the emergence and development of partnerships.”⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Rein & Stott, 2013: 81.

Figure 7

FACTORS AFFECTING PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES





Drivers are external factors that prompt organizations to consider forming a partnership. Broadly speaking, they represent sociopolitical factors in an organization's external environment that promote the formation of partnerships to achieve the organization's Sustainability objectives. Existing research has identified a variety of external drivers, or contextual factors, that affect an organization's tendency to become active with regard to Sustainability, including the ecological, organizational field context and individual contexts.⁵⁶ However, five additional factors specifically promote the formation of partnerships for sustainability. We list them here and describe each in more detail below:

- Social perceptions, expectations and preferences
- Technological developments
- Concerns about globalization
- The regulatory environment
- Decline in government efficacy

SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND PREFERENCES

Recent corporate scandals, such as those involving Enron and WorldCom, and negligent social and environmental behaviours by multinational corporations, such as BP, BHP Billiton and Royal Dutch Shell, have resulted in a loss of stakeholder trust in the business sector, as well as rising societal expectations regarding corporate responsibilities.⁵⁷ These changing perceptions have led to an increase in partnerships as "NGOs have moved quickly into the 'trust-void' and have taken advantage of the downward spiral in public perceptions." People are more "likely to trust an NGO to

do what is right compared to large companies because they are seen as being motivated by morals rather than just profit."⁵⁸ Additionally, socially responsible investment and shareholder activism have increased, as both shareholders and society in general become increasingly interested in discretionary firm behaviour. Further, the complexity of intertwined social and environmental problems, such as access to clean and safe drinking water for communities and businesses, has also led to the rise of partnerships, which are better equipped to solve such "increasingly complex challenges" that "exceed the capabilities of any single sector."⁵⁹

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Many technological developments also contribute to the formation of partnerships for Sustainability. Perhaps the most important technological force has been the rise of the Internet and communication technologies, which have given way to cyber stakeholder networks and have "transformed NGOs into a global 'voice' in today's highly international business environment."⁶⁰ Because stakeholders are now virtually connected to each other and others via social networking, it is easier for non-business stakeholders to share information and to mobilize and press their demands on business and to raise questions about business practices. Additionally, organizations are ever expanding, often leading them to form cooperative relationships to address stakeholder needs beyond their previous regional interactions.

⁵⁶ Bansal & Roth, 2000.

⁵⁷ Loza, 2004; Di Domenico, Tracey & Haugh, 2009.

⁵⁸ Argenti, 2004: 92.

⁵⁹ Austin, 2000b: 44.

⁶⁰ Choi & Kim, 2010: 56

CONCERNS ABOUT GLOBALIZATION

Although the current wave of globalization began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as large firms began to offshore and outsource production to developing countries, concerns regarding the effects of this trend remain evident. Whereas many firms embraced globalization to take advantage of lower costs and fewer regulations in developing countries, they have begun to realize that “production could be offshored and outsourced, but not corporate social responsibility.”⁶¹ Society has become increasingly skeptical of how firms manage Sustainability in developing countries, especially in light of landmark grievances such as the use of sweatshops for apparel manufacture.⁶² Additionally, increasing pressure to compete in global markets using non-consumptive approaches has led many firms to work with NGOs to develop more appropriate business models for developing economies that consider important local cultural differences.

THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Unsurprisingly, the regulatory environment is another important contextual driver of collaboration. Regulation is generally defined as “limits imposed on the behavior of economic actors contained in rules and standards.”⁶³ With regard to Sustainability, regulations can take various forms, including codes of conduct, management standards, certification schemes, reporting guidelines and eco-labels. These

⁶¹ Egels-Zandén & Hyllman, 2006: 306.

⁶² Anner, 2012.

⁶³ Pattberg, 2006: 241.

⁶⁴ Åhlström & Sjöström, 2005: 230.

⁶⁵ Kapelus, 2002.

⁶⁶ Mena & Palazzo, 2012: 532.

forms can originate from individual organizations, trade associations and/or industries. They can also emerge from NGOs and other agencies, such as the United Nations Secretary-General's declaration that “the UN would start cooperating in partnership with corporations through the Global Compact at the World Economic Forum in 1998.”⁶⁴ In order to comply with regulations, organizations often must partner with other organizations.

The absence of regulations also drives partnership formation, as organizations build partnerships to influence or avert imminent or pending regulation. For example, market failures, the relaxation of US anti-trust laws and a growing focus on transnational and international regulations have led firms to attempt to preempt or even coopt legislative processes.⁶⁵ Whereas “in the past, corporations were understood as objects of regulation, not as regulators,”⁶⁶ firms are now taking a role in shaping the standards of legitimacy through partnering with NGOs and other organizations to create business-friendly certification processes and self-regulation schemes.

DECLINE IN GOVERNMENT EFFICACY

Another key driver of collaborative engagements is the almost universal decline in governmental efficacy in well-developed countries. “Governments’ failure to ‘meet the escalating challenges of sustainable development...has opened up unprecedented opportunities for NGOs not just to replace government



but to protest against them, influence them, and collaborate with them’.⁶⁷ Government credibility, too, has suffered of late. In developed countries, a lack of confidence in government processes and outcomes has resulted from increasing government decentralization and the dissolution of many social functions from federal sectors whereas, in less developed countries, it stems from government weakness and corruption. According to Nikoloyuk, Burns and de Man, “In many cases, the role of government is either absent or indirect. It is not unusual that partnerships for sustainability are needed precisely because of a lack of government regulation, or extremely weak controls.”⁶⁸

Motivations for Partnering

In light of the external factors driving the formation of multi-sector partnerships, potential partners have many different motivations to link up with partners from other sectors. Understanding differences in partners’ motivations is important because these differences can produce a mismatch within the partnership and lead to difficulties in working together if motivations are not aligned or complementary. Additionally, when partners have different motivations, different types of partnerships may be needed.

⁶⁷ Sinh, 2002: 121.

⁶⁸ Nikoloyuk, Burns & de Man, 2010: 61.

⁶⁹ Brown, 2008.

⁷⁰ Prahalad & Hamel, 1990: 82.

TYPES OF MOTIVATIONS

Both business and NGO motivations, or business cases, for forming partnerships, can be classified into four main categories: legitimacy-oriented, competency-oriented, resource-oriented and society-oriented motivations. We define each below and then examine how each applies to business and NGOs respectively.

1. **Legitimacy-Oriented Motivations.** Legitimacy refers to social acceptance of an organization based on its conformance to societal norms and expectations.⁶⁹ Legitimacy is important for organizations because without it, organizations will have difficulty acquiring critical resources needed for long-term, sustained success. When businesses and NGOs form partnerships, both strive to gain or preserve their legitimacy in the public eye. Legitimacy can be sought either proactively or reactively.
2. **Competency-Oriented Motivations.** Competencies refer to “collective learning in organizations, especially how to coordinate diverse production skills and integrate multiple streams of technologies.”⁷⁰ Because businesses and NGOs have very different knowledge, skills and capabilities, sharing these competencies is an important motivator for both types of organizations. In particular, businesses can often complement NGOs with their “vast resources, an ability to get

things done, and readily measurable results,” whereas NGOs “are struggling for daily survival, working slowly on more complex problems, and do good works in ways that often cannot be measured.”⁷¹

3. **Resource-Oriented Motivations.** Resources refer to an organization’s assets, including financial and social capital. A major hurdle in addressing social and environmental problems is having “access to the right capital at the right time.”⁷² Both partners can bring social capital to the table through their network connections. Leveraging these complementary resources motivates both businesses and NGOs to partner in order to share the risks and reduce the costs of garnering these resources separately.
4. **Society-Oriented Motivations.** Both businesses and NGOs may also have broader society-oriented motivations for partnering. These motivations are designed to make changes to how society deals with issues of sustainability.

BUSINESS MOTIVATIONS FOR PARTNERING

Many other stakeholders often view businesses as the proverbial “root of evil” with regard to social and environmental maladies, and businesses and NGOs are thought, stereotypically, to be opposing. For example, “businesses are viewed as purely self-serving, pursuing profit in ways that are inherently destructive to human culture, well-being, and the environment,” whereas NGOs are viewed as “altruistic, charged with identifying

and solving the world’s problems, and acting as public watchdogs to raise the alarm about the evils of business.”⁷³ Because of these perceptions and because of campaigns by NGOs and shareholders that target business for its shortfalls, some business motivations to partner may initially be largely reactive.

However, many businesses have come to realize that if they are “merely responsive to NGOs, they can leave themselves open to damaging public attacks that link them to labour exploitation, negative environmental impact and other pathologies.”⁷⁴ Consequently, many businesses are shifting from being predominantly reactive to more proactive motivations for partnering.⁷⁵ Table 2, Business Motivations for Partnering, summarizes what leads businesses to partner.

1. **Legitimacy-Oriented Motivations.** Firms proactively motivated by legitimacy make the business case for sustainability partnerships to help them build a reputation, image and brand for social and environmental responsibility; attract and retain employees; and build the social licence to operate. “By becoming part of a partnership that promotes sustainable development, companies have an opportunity to present a ‘good global citizen’ side to their operations and may be able to bolster their public image.”⁷⁶ Businesses also use partnerships to help them attract and retain employees who value alignment with company values. Through association with a social and/or environmental

⁷¹ Kramer & Kania, 2006: 20.

⁷² Balderston, 2012: 24.

⁷³ Kramer & Kania, 2006: 20.

⁷⁴ Lambell, Ramia, Nyland & Michelotti, 2008: 86.

⁷⁵ Laasonen, Fougère & Kourula, 2012

⁷⁶ LaFrance & Lehmann, 2005: 219.

Table 2

BUSINESS MOTIVATIONS FOR PARTNERING

MOTIVATIONS	LEGITIMACY-ORIENTED	COMPETENCY-ORIENTED	RESOURCE-ORIENTED	SOCIETY-ORIENTED
Business	Building reputation, image and branding	Gaining expertise	Gaining access to networks	Influencing policy development
	Building the social licence to operate	Leveraging heterogeneous knowledge	Capacity building	Responding to stakeholder and shareholder activism regarding local and problems
	Avoiding confrontation	Identifying issues and trends	Creating innovative products and markets	
	Attracting & retaining employees	Growing awareness of complex social problems	Securing monetary funds	
	Saving face		Risk sharing	

*Black text signifies primarily proactive motivations, whereas **bolded text signifies primarily reactive motivations.**

NGO, firms can avoid confrontation by preempting stakeholder attacks. Partnerships with NGOs can also help firms to build community relationships and manage social conflicts. Partnerships can also emerge from reactive legitimacy motivations, such as saving face after the firm has received negative publicity. In the aftermath of a conflict, a partnership with an NGO can signify that the firm is taking actions to rectify the concerns raised. Realization that businesses can complement NGO efforts has led to an increase in both breadth and depth of business–NGO partnerships.⁷⁷

2. **Competency-Oriented Motivations.** Proactive competency-oriented motivations for businesses include gaining important contextual expertise from NGOs, leveraging synergies based on the different knowledge of the two organizations and identifying emerging issues and trends that are important to

stakeholders. From a more reactive perspective, businesses are eager tap into different external points of view on complex social and environmental problems to help them better address the issues they face.

3. **Resource-Oriented Motivations.** By engaging in partnerships with NGOs, businesses can use their unique resources to help to solve social and environmental issues. At the same time, they may also reap economic benefits such as improving the marketability or profitability of existing products or developing innovative new products or markets. Businesses can also gain social capital by partnering with NGOs, which are often better connected to community and volunteer networks.
4. **Society-Oriented Motivations.** A proactive business case for partnering includes the prospect of influencing policy development and shaping

⁷⁷ Rondinelli & London, 2003: 62.

legislation that may eventually affect the firm.⁷⁸ By becoming involved in shaping policy, businesses are able to coopt legislation to minimize its adverse effect on the firm or industry. In a more reactive way, businesses are motivated to address societal issues in order to respond to stakeholder activism. These motivations may stem from the nature of the business itself or from executives' and employees' visions for social responsibility.

NGO MOTIVATIONS FOR PARTNERING

Non-governmental organizations, commonly referred to as NGOs, are “groups whose stated purpose is the promotion of environmental and/or social goals rather than the achievement or protection of economic power in the marketplace or political power through the electoral process.”⁷⁹ NGOs can be categorized in terms of how they work with businesses. They use various tactics to promote social and environmental goals, from radical confrontation to a more moderate influence on business activities.⁸⁰ For example, Greenpeace and Global Exchange often develop campaigns against businesses, such as Greenpeace's attack on Shell regarding the disposal of the Brent Spar, an oil storage buoy in the North Sea. Other NGOs, such as the Rainforest Action Network and the Environmental Defense Fund, seek to engage businesses by working together toward complementary objectives.

The public often ranks NGOs higher than governments as environmental stewards. NGOs often take the confrontational route because they are viewed by many as “the moral compass and ethical watchdogs against the forces of government and capitalism.”⁸¹ However, in recent years, as a result of globalization processes and scarce resources,⁸² relationships between businesses and NGOs have dramatically shifted from “gadflies into allies”⁸³: that is, from a generally confrontational stance to a more cooperative posture.⁸⁴ For example, even Greenpeace, which has often been viewed as a confrontational NGO that won't accept money from businesses, has engaged in partnerships with select firms.⁸⁵ Table 3, NGO Motivations for Partnering, summarizes why NGOs join partnerships.

1. **Legitimacy-Oriented Motivations.** Like business, NGOs can have a proactive legitimacy-oriented motivation for partnering, such as boosting their reputations, images and branding. NGOs also see partnerships as a way to maximize their sphere of impact and garner wider support by acting in accordance with their core missions. Partnerships with firms can help NGOs become more prominent actors as a partnership extends the organization's reach and capabilities. NGOs are also motivated to engage in partnerships as a reactive response to funders' demands to become more business-like. NGO funders increasingly demand accountability for NGOs' resources and outcomes; therefore,

⁷⁹ Bendell, 2000: 16.

⁸⁰ Argenti, 2004; Åhlström & Sjöström, 2005.

⁸¹ International Foundation for the Conservation of Natural Resources, 2002.

⁸² Loza, 2004, 299.

⁸³ Yaziji, 2004

⁸⁴ Rondinelli & London, 2003; Kourula & Halme. 2008.

⁸⁵ Åhlström & Sjöström, 2005; Hartman & Stafford, 2006.

Table 3

NGO MOTIVATIONS FOR PARTNERING

MOTIVATIONS	LEGITIMACY-ORIENTED	COMPETENCY-ORIENTED	RESOURCE-ORIENTED	SOCIETY-ORIENTED
NGOs	Building reputation, image and branding	Acquiring complementary capabilities, such as technical and managerial skills	Gaining access to networks and to business and political leaders	Influencing social and environmental change in businesses, industries and society
	Maximizing sphere of impact and garnering wider support		Reducing costs	Building public awareness of issues
	Becoming a more prominent actor		Securing monetary funding	Making the world better by solving problems
	Responding to demands for accountability		Gaining goods, services and volunteers	

*Black text signifies primarily proactive motivations, whereas **bolded text signifies primarily reactive motivations.**

much like businesses, NGOs require performance legitimacy.⁸⁶ By partnering, NGOs and businesses can fulfill many of their legitimacy-oriented motivations.

- 2. Competency-Oriented Motivations.** The main competency-oriented motivation for NGOs is the proactive acquisition of technical and managerial skills that are complementary to the NGO’s own skill base. By combining their differing competencies, “partnerships have been a way to expand capabilities beyond what the organization’s own resource base permits.”⁸⁷ The insert at right provides an example of how businesses might be able to aid NGOs.
- 3. Resource-Oriented Motivations.** Whereas businesses often have deep financial pockets, NGOs often lack the necessary funds to address social and environmental issues. Thus, NGOs can

Asian Tsunami Relief

A study of the Asian tsunami relief efforts shows that “the delivery of aid was severely hampered by a lack of logistics expertise.” In fact, “11 months after the tsunami, the Red Cross had yet to spend \$400 million of the \$576 million it received in earmarked donations. Many of the companies that donated cash so generously to these well-meaning nonprofits might actually have been able to deliver assistance more efficiently themselves” (Kramer & Kania, 2006: 22).

directly or indirectly garner resources to advance their societal missions by partnering with business. NGOs can also gain access to other businesses and political networks through their partners’ contacts.

⁸⁶ Brown, op cit.; Holzer, 2008; Lee, 2011.

⁸⁷ Sagawa & Segal, 2000: 108.



4. **Society-Oriented Motivations.** NGOs are proactively interested in partnering in order to increase public awareness of sustainability and to induce positive sustainability-related changes in businesses, industries and society. NGOs that choose confrontational strategies do so to raise general awareness of an issue and to coerce a business into change. Confrontational NGOs may choose their targets based on a variety of criteria, including businesses with prominent brand names, more consequential impacts, and larger size.⁸⁸ Similarly, NGOs often choose to target front-running companies, because “working with trendsetters gives maximum leverage, because the changes they make ripple through their supply chains and cause competitors to follow suit.”⁸⁹ The ways that NGOs partner with businesses can range from “co-leading projects to solve specific social or environmental problems, to joint marketing, to education activities.”⁹⁰ NGOs may sometimes even work with some of the “worst” companies to help address the NGO’s core social and/or environmental mission.

Although NGO engagement with business may seem to have shifted from pressuring to partnering, “It is very likely that many NGOs who do engage in collaboration with business corporations still see themselves as adversaries, considering their collaboration as an arena for legitimate disagreement and negotiation.”⁹¹ In many ways, once NGOs are “closer” to firm operations, they may be able to better achieve their goals by focusing on

⁸⁸ Yaziji & Doh, 2009; Hendry, 2006.

⁸⁹ Yarnold, 2007: 23.

⁹⁰ Ahlstrom, et al., op cit.: 237

⁹¹ Laasonen et al., 2012: 538.

⁹² Rein et al., 2005: 107.

practical solutions to social and environmental issues — as in the landmark partnership between McDonalds and the Environmental Defense Fund regarding sustainable food packaging materials.

Partner and Partnership Characteristics

“The manner in which a partnership unfolds is directly related both to the context in which it is situated and to an understanding by partners and stakeholders that different kinds of developments and responses are necessary.”⁹²

This section of the report will highlight important characteristics of partners and partnerships, which are important for partner selection and partnership design. In turn, these choices will likely affect the subsequent process issues that partners face, a topic we consider in the next section.

RESOURCE PROFILE

Perhaps one of the most important bases for partner selection is each partner’s resource profile. Typically, for-profit organizations have deep financial pockets and business-oriented expertise. Non-profit organizations often lack financial means and a business mindset, but do have other important assets, such as expertise regarding the generation and distribution of public goods and negotiation and facilitation skills. Partners in any collaborative relationship should know how each

partner's capabilities complement another partner's capabilities and select partners with the resource profile necessary to meet the objective.⁹³ Thus, the current financial standing of each partner is another important characteristic, as funds or a lack of funds are likely to influence the process and outcomes of the collaboration. In particular, "if corporate finances take a nosedive, compassion is likely to be jettisoned in favor of survival."⁹⁴

NGO TYPE

For businesses working with NGOs, it is crucial to understand the implications that NGO type may have for partnership processes and outcomes. Whereas some NGOs follow a partnership strategy to achieve their goals, others prefer to act independently.⁹⁵ Although an independent NGO may engage in dialogue with other organizations, it is not likely to contribute to a meaningful collaborative relationship. NGOs can be typified in many ways. For example, while "reformative NGOs prefer using symbolic gain strategies (e.g. positive publicity) and material gain strategies (e.g. 'boycott' — mobilizing consumers to buy a certain product) to induce reinstitutionalization, radical NGOs will use symbolic damage strategies (e.g. negative publicity) and material damage strategies (e.g. boycott) to effect deinstitutionalization."⁹⁶ Further, NGOs have different objectives. Operational NGOs are likely to have expertise with regard to providing social services, whereas advocacy NGOs are likely to have greater expertise in lobbying governments but are unlikely to

be able to provide the same support processes for sustainable development as operational NGOs. NGO type, then, becomes an important consideration for partner selection.

REPRESENTATION

For a collaborative effort to have the best results, actors should "consider carefully their entire stakeholder network, not only who directly affects, or is affected by, organizational outcomes but those who are directly or indirectly affected by these outcomes."⁹⁷ In particular, "the broad participation of multi-stakeholder partnerships across sectors forms the basis of inclusiveness and thus the possibility of overcoming a participation gap, meaning that all parties relevant to a specific issue have a say in matters," and "also ensures that 'dissident,' more critical voices about different approaches are being heard and can be taken into account, which increases credibility and quality."⁹⁸ This approach often results in a situation where affected stakeholders are represented by another party. However, when stakeholder groups are represented by only one or a few participants, the "two-table problem" may emerge in which "these stakeholders must seek consensus within their organization as well as at the stakeholder table."⁹⁹ It is thus important that the stakeholder representatives have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the group they represent.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ Dahan, Doh, Oetzel & Yaziji, 2010.

⁹⁴ Van Sandt & Sud, 2012: 323.

⁹⁵ Åhlström & Sjöström, 2005.

⁹⁶ Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010a: 595.

⁹⁷ Polonsky, 2001: 44; Gray, 1989.

⁹⁸ Pinkse & Kolk, 2012: 184.

⁹⁹ Margerum, 2008: 495; Putnam, 1988.

CULTURAL FIT

Both organizational and ethnic cultural considerations are important characteristics of partners that almost inevitably affect partnership dynamics. Differences in organizational cultures between business and NGOs stem largely from their differing missions and accountability systems. Each organization has its own culture and goals, and the degree of fit or alignment between partners' cultures and goals may influence processes and outcomes. Differences between business and governmental cultures also stem from the stakeholders to whom they are accountable, with businesses often being lither in their decision making than the more stodgy decision making processes of bureaucracies.¹⁰¹ For example, one case recounted a practitioner saying "I don't know if you've heard this about collaborating, but everyone thinks it's a wonderful idea. They don't account for how much time it takes to have organizations trying to do projects together, and when two organizational cultures deal with turf issues, all that takes a lot of time."¹⁰²

Cultures don't have to be similar for partnership to work; however, partners need to be aware of cultural issues and their possible impacts. Partners also need to have similar or at least complementary goals. For example, the CEO of Timberland claims "if you can find at least one common goal... you've also found at least one reason for working with each other, not against."¹⁰³

Partnership success may also be influenced by differences in national and ethnic cultures. Generally, national culture has a great impact than organizational cultures on views regarding Sustainability and cooperation. For example, a study on the differences between France and Brazil showed that the weak monitoring processes in Brazil and strong government intervention in France pose differing constraints for organizations.¹⁰⁴ Further, "the successful implementation of CSR models, including partnerships, is based on the assumption of a strong state that is capable of providing an enabling institutional environment for partnerships to evolve in; yet, these conditions are largely absent in most developing countries."¹⁰⁵ As a result, less-developed countries, where many social partnerships occur, may pose additional complications for organizations. Finally, in some settings, the context is rife with conflict: e.g. in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In such conflict-ridden areas, partnerships must put extra effort into trust and capacity building and explicitly consider the local cultural context.¹⁰⁶

The role of indigenous peoples (such as Canada's First Nations) in partnerships deserves special mention because of the "distinctiveness" of their culture and economy and their special attachment to and historical continuity with the lands they have traditionally used or occupied."¹⁰⁷ Although they have often been marginalized in the past, indigenous people's involvement as equals in partnerships is not only necessary but also offers the potential for shared

¹⁰⁰ Cheng & Sturtevant, 2012.

¹⁰¹ Gray, 1995.

¹⁰² Suárez, 2011: 320.

¹⁰³ Austin et al., 2010: 734.

¹⁰⁴ Sobczak & Martins, 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Bitzer & Glasbergen, 2010: 223.

¹⁰⁶ Kolk & Lenfant, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Sawyer & Gomez, 2008: 12.

Canada–First Nations Partnerships

In 2011, the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations began a partnership, acknowledging the importance of communication and coordination to achieve positive change in their relationship. The agreement is governed by several guiding principles that include:

1. Improving relationships and strong partnerships between Canada and First Nations respectful of Aboriginal and Treaty rights as recognized and affirmed in the Constitution Act, 1982;
2. Building effective, appropriate, transparent and fully accountable governance structures;
3. Empowering success of individuals through access to education and opportunity;
4. Enabling strong, sustainable, and self-sufficient communities;
5. Creating conditions to accelerate economic development opportunities and maximize benefits for all Canadians; and
6. Respecting the role of First Nations' culture and language in Canadian history and culture.

For example, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was recently signed by Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the First Nations in British Columbia (BC) to create a joint dialogue process regarding issues related to fisheries and aquatic resources in BC (Infoyu, 2013). However, only a few weeks later, concerns surfaced over the degree of voice that First Nations have in drafting education legislation. These events point to the difficulties inherent in trying to design partnerships across these historically problematic boundaries (Galloway, 2013).

¹⁰⁸ Murphy & Arenas, 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Lui & Ngo, 2005: 1131.

¹¹⁰ Reed & Reed, 2009.

¹¹¹ Selsky & Parker, 2005: 858.

benefits, including new business ideas, improvements in handling disruptive change and techniques for sustainable ecosystem management.¹⁰⁸ Because of the scars left by past colonial relationships, designing partnerships to ensure voice for indigenous peoples is especially critical for many reasons that are consistent with the broad definition of sustainability as ensuring the well-being of all people.

POWER DYNAMICS

Similar to the representation characteristic, power dynamics and imbalances or dependencies are also very important to partnerships and collaborative processes and outcomes. Asymmetric dependence occurs when there is an imbalance of power in a partnership. In these cases, “a stronger partner will tend to influence or manipulate a weaker one” and “in response, the weaker partner may pretend to be cooperative while actually trying to avoid its partner's requests so as to protect its own interests.”¹⁰⁹ Businesses often have more power because of financial considerations; however, NGOs often have a great deal of power as they can mobilize social movements against partnering organizations.¹¹⁰ In general, “large power imbalances are viewed as problematic because they may lead partners into political or opportunistic behavior that can serve one or both partners' interests at the expense of partnership performance.”¹¹¹

PREVIOUS PARTNERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Each partner has its own experiences of partnering (or not partnering) with other organizations, or perhaps

with the same organization but in a different context. Such experience, positive or negative, will likely have a significant impact on collaborative processes and outcomes. Positive experiences will likely pave the way for trust, which is another important partner characteristic. Although trust is often developed in the process of collaborating, it is also inherent in relationships that have continued over time, as trust begets trust.¹¹² Similarly, previous grievances are likely to have detrimental effects on subsequent partnerships. Hence, partner experiences are an important component to be considered during partner selection.

TIME HORIZONS

Another important partner characteristic is a partner's time horizon for results. "There is a real phenomenon of funder fatigue and funders expecting a turnaround and impact in a time period that is not realistic."¹¹³ Each partner's time frame expectations should be known early on in collaborative processes. Additionally, as noted above, partners' time horizons may shift because of contextual factors, such as economic downturns or political contingencies, or because of changes within the partnership itself that may require the partners to renegotiate their relationship as the partnership evolves.

PARTNER REPUTATION

Whether corporate, nonprofit, community or government, a potential partner's reputation, and hence, legitimacy, is important to the subsequent processes and outcomes of the partnership. Partners that have positive reputations are likely to complement one another, whereas partners that team up with others that have a poor reputation run the risk of delegitimation. This effect is particularly true for NGOs that are perceived as having been co-opted, or "in bed with the enemy," when they join forces with stigmatized firms.¹¹⁴ Similarly, firms looking to improve their image via partnerships should be aware of their partnering organization's ability to draw positive attention. Additionally, a partner's degree of centrality in their network, is an important characteristic.¹¹⁵ "As high centrality combines with increasing interconnectedness of the actors within a supply chain network, instrumental approaches are progressively replaced by more relational attitudes aimed at joint value creation among partners."¹¹⁶ The level of support and inspiration for Sustainability and collaboration within one's partner is another important partner characteristic. Organizations interviewed for this project, including The Sustainable Food Lab and Interface Canada, indicated the importance of inspiration from top-level leaders in making their partnership choices.

¹¹² Gulati & Nickerson, 2008.

¹¹³ London & Rondinelli, 2003: 34.

¹¹⁴ Baur & Schmitz, 2012.

¹¹⁵ Rowley, 1997.

¹¹⁶ Vurro, Russo & Perrini, 2009: 607.



Process Issues

“Partnership, it’s a state of mind...It’s a conviction, and it’s true; if you can solve problems together, it’s better, and they will probably be settled in a better way than confrontation.”¹¹⁷

Partnership process factors refer to the nature of the interactions among the partners as they engage with one another to achieve the goals of the partnership. Whereas drivers are largely outside the control of the partners, process dynamics are largely within the partners’ collective scope of influence. Consequently, paying attention to the process and adjusting it as the partnership moves forward are two critical ways that partners can increase the chance of successful and sustained outcomes.

We identified a wide array of process issues in each of body of literature we reviewed, although the most common process issues were present in both literatures. While, in general, process issues directly impact outcomes, partnerships over extended time frames have a dynamic and often shifting nature. For those partnerships, process dynamics early in a partnership’s history are likely to have an important impact on the level of early outcomes, but in turn these outcomes may provoke changes in the process going forward, which then shape future outcomes. The circular arrows linking the process and outcomes columns in Figure 8 (p. 55) are intended to capture this reciprocal relationship among process dynamics and outcomes.

¹¹⁷ Poncelet, 2001: 20.

¹¹⁸ Selsky & Parker, 2005.

¹¹⁹ Manring, 2007: 329.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Senge, 1990.

¹²² Le Ber & Branzei, 2010a: 164.

EXPLORING DIFFERENCES

This factor encompasses a variety of more specific actions that partners must take to ensure that they can capitalize on the different perspectives, competencies and values that led to initial partnership formation. Although partners aspire to gain access to the unique contributions their counterparts bring to the partnership, in practice, doing so can prove quite challenging. For example, partners need to acknowledge their respective experience and identities¹¹⁸ and then find ways to engage in “multiplex” thinking. “Multiplexing refers to the parallel transmission of more than one message over a single line.”¹¹⁹ What this means in practice is that the partners need to hold not only their own view but also the view of the larger partnership vision simultaneously. As Manring observed about the Roanoke (Virginia) River ecosystem partnership, the network “became increasingly proficient at simultaneously and in parallel grasping their stakeholder-specific interests while recognizing the larger ecosystem network perspective.”¹²⁰ Senge¹²¹ has referred to this ability as developing holographic thinking — that is, each partner embraces the same vision for the partnership, which incorporates the partner’s own goals, the goals of other partners and the overall goals of the partnership. Others suggest that partners need to adjust their value frames to find convergence or frame fusion. Frame fusion refers to “the construction of a new prognostic frame that motivates and disciplines partners’ cross sector interactions while preserving their distinct contribution to value creation” and retaining their separate identities.¹²²

CREATING A SHARED VISION

While some articles referred to the necessity for partners to have “shared goals,” others emphasized the need for commitment to a shared framework or vision, within which partners could pursue their organizations’ individual goals.¹²³ To the extent that partners can jointly subscribe to this vision or framework, they can wholeheartedly commit to the partnership and to their partners. Margerum refers to such a vision as a clear and strategic direction.¹²⁴ In the words of Manring¹²⁵: “The network must be able to build a conceptual infrastructure that supports the systemic perspective.” Jason Leadbitter, Director of Sustainability for INEOS ChlorVinyls, described The Natural Step framework as playing such a role in shaping his organization’s initial interactions with Forum for the Future (which oversees The Natural Step process) around PVC sustainability. According to Leadbitter, “The framework enabled us to ask the question, ‘What does it take to make PVC sustainable?’ It went beyond the triple bottom line” to identify a host of non-sustainable practices in which the company and the PVC industry were engaged.¹²⁶

Agreeing on a shared vision is different from having the same goals. As we discussed above, partners’ motivations for what their organizations want to achieve through partnering may differ (e.g. one may desire credibility; the other, income generation), but discovery of a shared vision is the vehicle by which these individual goals can be achieved. As we indicated earlier in our discussion of Figure 6, the

¹²³ Armitage, 2005; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Le Ber & Branzi, 2010a.

¹²⁴ Margerum, 2002: 147.

¹²⁵ Manring, 2007: 330.

¹²⁶ Personal interview with first author, July 26, 2013.

¹²⁷ Armitage, 2005: 251.

¹²⁸ Van de Kerkoff, 2006: 285.

Sustainability Continuum (p. 25), partnerships based only on transactional exchanges fall short of achieving collaborative outcomes, which require “a collaborative vision...reflective of multiple values and worldviews.”¹²⁷

Another aspect of building a shared vision is engaging in visioning exercises that explore different future scenarios and their implications for current practices. Additionally, Van de Kerkhof¹²⁸ recommended a technique called “interactive backcasting,” which “aimed to enhance deliberation by stimulating the participants to explore the implementation of various options, in different contexts, and to find out the obstacles and opportunities that might occur ‘along the way’ when implementing these options.” Others have mentioned the use of Delphi processes and other valuing techniques to tease out points of agreements and disagreement, to inform future planning in the partnership process.

AGREEING ON EXPLICIT NORMS AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

In addition to committing to an overarching vision, partners need to agree on the more practical aspects of their interactions. For example, has the partnership established ground rules for participation that can keep the conversation civil and constructive? Do partners have an understanding about whether and how the joint work is to be kept confidential and who will take credit for any new intellectual property created? How can partners work across differing organizational or

national cultures? The partnership is more likely to run smoothly and partners are less likely to violate each other's expectations for good partner behaviour when partners take the time to sit down and agree on the procedures they will use for their interactions, including acceptable and unacceptable behaviours (often codified in ground rules), such as the requirement that only one person speaks at a time or how to handle relationships with the media.¹²⁹

BUILDING TRUST

The need to establish trust among partners is probably the advice most often given about partnerships. What is less evident, however, is that trust is not just an interpersonal good feeling but an outcome of many other actions taken by partners. Additionally, while developing trust among partners who have long histories of being on opposite side of the table is not easy, regaining trust once it is violated is even more difficult and may take a much longer time. Trust accrues from behaving in a trustworthy manner toward others but also requires "consistently exuding trust in others."¹³⁰ A key way that trust emerges in partnerships is through ensuring that others have the freedom to present their concerns and that these concerns are heard and honored. If proceedings quickly turn positional or a partner's views are questioned or disparaged, trust will be impeded. Trust builds when "members of a network acknowledge the legitimacy of each other's goals" even if they differ from one's own.¹³¹ Thus, the quality of the dialogue

¹²⁹ Gray, 1989.

¹³⁰ Morse, 2010: 439.

¹³¹ Manring, 2007: 332.

¹³² Ansell & Gash, 2008.

¹³³ Lewicki et al., 2003.

¹³⁴ Baldwin & Ross, 2012: 225.

¹³⁵ Gray, 1989; Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Todd, 2002; Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Rauschmayer & Risse, 2005; Morse, 2010.

¹³⁶ Gray, 1989; Castro & Nielsen, 2001.

among the parties is pivotal in fostering and maintaining trust because it allows the partners to get past their stereotypical views of each other¹³² while still respecting the identities that partners embrace and cherish.¹³³ For example, in a dispute over water use allocation and monitoring in Australia, government water authority staff came to realize that "irrigators, while concerned for economic well-being (private interest), were also proud of producing quality food for the nation and providing employment for a strong regional community (public interest)."¹³⁴ Acknowledging those aspects of the irrigators' identities made it easier for the irrigators to consider alternatives to their initial positions and reach consensus on key issues in the planning process. We consider consensus separately below.

HANDLING CONFLICT

Conflict over values, goals, procedures, roles and relationships is part of working in partnerships that bridge sectors.¹³⁵ Some partners have even acknowledged that conflict was beneficial to the partnership. For example, in co-management negotiations for natural resources, conflict was characterized as a catalyst for starting the negotiations. Battle-worn enemies may become partners to end the conflict.¹³⁶ Similarly, in the partnership between INEOS ChlorVinyls and World Wildlife Fund for Nature, an initial campaign against PVC by Greenpeace was pivotal in getting the company to the table although Greenpeace eventually elected not to pursue the partnership. Nonetheless, according to Jason Leadbitter of INEOS,

“Greenpeace was nipping at our heels. We were forced into partnership kicking and screaming, but Greenpeace has done us a lot of good.”¹³⁷ He believes there is still a role for NGOs who will raise tough issues for business.

Additionally, conflicts are to be expected initially, but also throughout the partnership, because partners operate with different frames of the problems and how to solve them.¹³⁸ These differences are especially true for issues of sustainability, where the problems are ecologically and socially complex. As Rauschmayer and Risse¹³⁹ note, “the existing knowledge that can be used for conflict resolution is multifaceted and often conditional; certain outcomes can be reached by various alternatives, and probabilities may or may not be known; additionally, the information is often incomplete.” These kinds of uncertainties mean that some calculated risks may need to be taken in order to take joint actions. This need to take risks can be problematic if partners’ tolerance for risk-taking differ. Such conflicts can be minimized by selecting partners with similar values and risk perceptions, but such selection can also limit the partnership’s potential to discover novel or breakthrough solutions.

During the initial phase of the partnership, it is advisable to agree on a process for resolving any difficult disputes that occur. For example, in a partnership between Oxfam and Unilever to explore how to reduce poverty in Indonesia, the partners encountered major differences,

but were able to reach an agreement that “eased pressure” because the partners “knew they had a way to manage irreconcilable differences if they arose.”¹⁴⁰ As the example box below indicates, these partners did truly wrestle with each other during this partnership; nonetheless, they never reached an impasse that required them to use their dispute resolution procedure.

Reducing Poverty in India

“To move beyond mere transactional exchanges, such projects demand people be willing to open themselves, recognize their blind spots and rigid preconceptions, and enter into a process of genuine mutual influence. During the Indonesia study process, Oxfam and Unilever entered into intensive and sometimes difficult debates. Such discussions caused all parties to challenge their respective biases and assumptions. This process was a great source of learning, which would not have occurred without a spirit of openness, respect and trust” (Senge et al., 2006: 429).

¹³⁷ Personal interview with first author, July 26, 2013.

¹³⁸ Lewicki et al., 2003.

¹³⁹ Rauschmayer & Risse, 2005: 656.

¹⁴⁰ Senge, Dow & Neathe, 2006: 426.

CONSENSUS-BASED DECISION MAKING

Several articles stressed the importance of consensus-building as an important process for decision making among partners.¹⁴¹ For the policy-making context, consensus-building is thought to have a number of instrumental advantages over formal (non-participatory) policy making. Consensus-building reduces conflict, increases compliance, improves policy, prevents litigation and promotes public participation.¹⁴² It can also contribute to trust building and joint learning because each partner's concerns are given serious consideration in decision making.

For example, in a workshop among irrigators and government, a key feature of the partners' interaction was described as follows, "The small group discussion...transformed the process of understanding value, into collaboratively linking issues and concerns to potential strategies. The positive discourse enabled 'reframing' to identify shared interests and find common ground about equity and triple-bottom-line sustainability...that resulted in irrigators agreeing on words about fairness and environment for the first time...They realized they could talk about sustainability in a way that was nonthreatening to their members but seen as legitimate by government."¹⁴³

DEVISING ACCOUNTABILITY CRITERIA

The importance of developing accountability criteria for assessing progress against joint goals has been stressed by articles in both bodies of literature reviewed,¹⁴⁴ although Jacobs, Garfin and Lenart¹⁴⁵ suggest that defining metrics of success is a challenging task for partners. Such an accountability system might include inputs, processes and outcomes maintained in an electronic data management system,¹⁴⁶ but the key is that partners use the information for continual improvement of the partnership.¹⁴⁷ In unbalanced partnerships, the tendency for partners with greater power to dominate the assessment process is clearly a risk.¹⁴⁸ In collaborative governance arrangements, government still retains the ultimate responsibility for accountability, so it can be tricky to devise procedures that are effective for a partnership while enabling government to meet its obligations.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, partnerships that are truly collaborative "create public value when they can be characterized as being resilient and engaged in regular assessment."¹⁵⁰ However, Kallis, Kiparsky and Norgaard¹⁵¹ point to a tension between accountability and flexibility in collaborative governance. Hendriks¹⁵² perhaps sets the highest bar for accountability, suggesting that it generate equitable and just

¹⁴¹ Rondinelli & London, 2003; Doelle & Sinclair, 2006; Van de Kerkhof, 2006; Manring, 2007; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Weible, Pattison & Sabatier, 2010; Baldwin & Ross, 2012.

¹⁴² Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987; Van de Kerkhof, 2006.

¹⁴³ Baldwin, & Ross 2012: 225, 227.

¹⁴⁴ Esteves & Barclay, 2011

¹⁴⁵ Jacobs, Garfin, & Lenart, 2005.

¹⁴⁶ Bryson et al., 2006.

¹⁴⁷ Bardach, 2001.

¹⁴⁸ Kain & Söderberg, 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Hall & Kennedy, 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Bryson et al., 2006: 51.

¹⁵¹ Kallis, Kiparsky & Norgaard, 2009.

¹⁵² Hendriks, 2009.

outcomes. One recommendation for establishing accountability in collaborative governance processes is to follow the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 1998 Aarhus Convention.¹⁵³

The following examples of accountability criteria were offered by Kolk and Lenfant¹⁵⁴: “Anglo American and De Beers use a socioeconomic impact assessment toolbox for all of their community-supporting initiatives. Katanga’s programs and investments have been developed through a data-driven risk management framework. BHP–Billiton touches upon the necessity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their community investment programs, and Metorex reports ‘continually improving community development and community investment programs through monitoring, measuring and managing our social and economic impacts’.” Nevertheless, Kolk, Van Dolen and Vock¹⁵⁵ note that these companies did not provide much detailed information about their monitoring and evaluation methodologies. And in regeneration partnerships, Cornelius and Wallace¹⁵⁶ recommend using community scorecards as a methodology for enabling communities to monitor partnership progress.

Dienhart and Ludescher¹⁵⁷ suggest that to be successful cross-sector partnerships should have the capacity and legitimacy to perform five tasks:

1. Monitor the network of cross-sector inputs and outputs.

¹⁵³ Partidario & Sheate, 2013; UNECE, 1998.

¹⁵⁴ Kolk & Lenfant, 2012: 505.

¹⁵⁵ Kolk, Van Dolen, & Vock, 2010.

¹⁵⁶ Cornelius & Wallace, 2010.

¹⁵⁷ Dienhart & Ludescher, 2010: 403.

¹⁵⁸ Agranoff & McGuire, 2001.

¹⁵⁹ Ansell & Gash, 2008: 552.

¹⁶⁰ Polonsky, Garma & Chia, 2004.

2. Evaluate the efficiency of how the sectors contribute and integrate resources.
3. Use the members’ capacity and legitimacy to convene, exhort, or redefine rights and responsibilities.
4. Distribute the right to define and judge the value of what is being produced.
5. Evaluate and alter the governance and the project in terms of justice, fairness, and community well-being.

SHARING POWER: ENSURING REPRESENTATION AND VOICE

Agranoff and McGuire¹⁵⁸ have pointed out that, because of their institutional affiliations, greater power is vested in those with greater formal authority, those who control scarce or critical resources and those who have discursive legitimacy (e.g. the ability to speak legitimately for issues or other organizations). These people are likely to hold leadership roles in governance partnerships. However, according to Ansell and Gash,¹⁵⁹ “collaborative governance requires a commitment to a positive strategy of empowerment and representation of weaker or disadvantaged stakeholders.”

One way that differential endowments of power have been handled is through explicit contractual provisions designed to level the playing field by specifying the less powerful partner’s rights and bases for redress.¹⁶⁰ Other approaches address the problem by building

safeguards into the deliberations themselves, such as facilitated discussions, consensus decision making or specific requirements to involve previously excluded parties, such as First Nations or other indigenous peoples.¹⁶¹ For others, the key issue is voice — that less powerful participants feel empowered enough to challenge other stakeholders, assert their interests and contribute to the solutions.¹⁶² For example, as part of a newly created assessment process for environmental impacts, the Canadian government has set up renewable resource councils (RRCs) at the local level to review applications for land and water use, signalling a shift in the authority for decisions to local communities.

Researchers have identified many reasons for the importance of representation of disadvantaged stakeholders. Adopting a normative stance, Hecht et al.¹⁶³ assert that both civil society and regulated entities should have opportunities both to participate in environmental decision making and to challenge government decisions that are not based on science and law. Others claim that the most sustainable decisions will emerge from the active involvement of affected communities in the processes of problem definition and deliberation.¹⁶⁴ Enabling these communities to have a voice in business affairs that impact their lives is critical not only for businesses' reputations and licence to operate in these venues but also for improving the livelihoods of people in these communities. Others stress the instrumental benefits of transparency and involvement in terms of problem ownership and compliance with agreements, insisting that such participation is a right of community stakeholders whom sustainability decisions will affect.

¹⁶¹ Armitage, 2005.

¹⁶² Manring, 2007; Dienhart, 2010.

¹⁶³ Hecht et al., 2012.

¹⁶⁴ Doelle & Sinclair, 2006.

¹⁶⁵ Fox & Gershman, 2000.

¹⁶⁶ Cashore, Gale, Meidinger, Newsome, 2006.

(See the example box below detailing the co-management negotiations between the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Pueblo tribe regarding Kasha Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument.) Feelings of powerlessness among stakeholder groups are also more likely to lead to conflicts with more powerful parties.¹⁶⁵

Shifts in power relationships among partners may also result from certification efforts within a field because of the increased inclusiveness and shifts away from industry domination toward more pluralistic structures that include environmental, community, and indigenous peoples' voices and interests.¹⁶⁶

Kasha Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument

Significantly, the Pueblo tribal council was not approached as just another stakeholder or interest group but as a partner in drafting the plan alternatives prior to public review...The Pueblo helped the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) develop culturally acceptable alternatives, such as excluding any trails leading toward former village sites that border the monument...BLM staff acknowledged, "We don't ask details on sacred sites; rather, we ask the Pueblo to help us guide visitors with their own staff." The BLM issues notices to close the monument during tribal holidays and ceremonies in order to protect the privacy of the Pueblo. Tribal representatives appreciated that the BLM did not ask them to justify or identify the location and importance of sacred places, a major privacy problem with some federal consultation processes. "So far, the BLM listens to some of our ideas," said the tribal liaison officer. When the Pueblo's rangers educate visitors with their cultural and historical perspectives, it benefits all concerned (Pinel & Pecos, 2012: 599).

CULTIVATING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a critical part of the process of partnering. For partnerships, leadership is often referred to as informal or formal facilitation or mediation.¹⁶⁷ A brokering or mediating organization is a key factor in facilitating collective action.¹⁶⁸ Dyadic (two-party) “collaborations tend to enjoy more success when respected and independent third-party organizations are involved as facilitators and capacity builders. We conjecture that this will also be the case in cross-sector collaborations in general when conflict has preceded collaboration and power imbalances exist between partners.”¹⁶⁹ Even if formal facilitation is not used, those performing this role informally must have the skills to ensure that all partners are included in the conversation and that their valued ends are incorporated into the share vision. If not, the partnership is destined to fail.

As noted above, a critical task in partnerships involves resolving the inevitable conflicts that arise. Writing about business–NGO partnerships, Jonker and Nijhof¹⁷⁰ observed, “Despite positive intentions, the interactions are complex and unpredictable and therefore difficult to guide in a specific direction. The dialogue that needs to take place between the parties involved is guided and shaped by a confrontation of different world-views, risks and interests. Furthermore the dialogue could be blurred — if not distorted — by correct or incorrect perceptions the parties involved hold towards each

other. As a result, confusion or distrust might occur in the participating organisations. It also might lead to fragmentation and inactivity.”¹⁷¹ So a dialogue is, by definition, a time-consuming and fragile process requiring specific competencies. Among the vital leadership competencies are cultural sensitivity and empathy, which are needed to incorporate the diverse backgrounds of different stakeholders and varying rules of the game that each imports, often unwittingly, into the dialogue. “When structured properly, this kind of dialogue vents anger and encourages engagement; skillful discussion can facilitate resolution and expose misconceptions” that “can be demystified.”¹⁷²

Gray¹⁷³ and Ansell and Gash¹⁷⁴ have written detailed accounts of the various roles that leaders can and should play in cross-sector partnerships and have stressed that the idea of shared leadership rather than “a leader” is vital to partnership success. Sharing leadership in this way will enable all partners to feel ownership of the project, but may also be easier after a basis of trust has been established. Manring¹⁷⁵ found that ecosystem management networks involving multiple stakeholders, many of whom were performing net-broker functions, tended to be “leaderful rather than leaderless” and that these partnerships transcended more than one level. These multi-leader arrangements provided great resilience to these partnerships.¹⁷⁶ Leadership within partnerships may also shift as the

¹⁶⁷ Gray, 1989; Crane, 1998; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Manring, 2007; Murphy & Arenas, 2010.

¹⁶⁸ Selsky & Parker, 2005.

¹⁶⁹ Murphy & Arenas, 2010.

¹⁷⁰ Jonker & Nijhof, 2006: 458.

¹⁷¹ Livesey and Kearins, 2002.

¹⁷² Johnson & Brennan, 2007: 305.

¹⁷³ Gray, 2008.

¹⁷⁴ Ansell & Gash, 2008.

¹⁷⁵ Manring, 2007: 334.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.



partnership progresses or new players are added. When such shifts happen organically, leadership becomes distributed throughout the partnership, such that it is important to talk about leadership rather than “leaders.” When this happens, as in the Monroe County Watershed case in northeastern Pennsylvania, “this organic shift of leadership intensified the task forces’ engagement with their respective tasks, resulting in integrated thinking and acting at all levels much to the consternation of the County Commissioners, as well as certain task force members.”¹⁷⁷ Formal leaders need to adjust their own leadership styles accordingly and work for the collective advantage of all parties.

Outcomes

The basic premise about the value of partnerships is that outcomes occur that presumably the partners could not accomplish on their own. The reasoning behind this is basically that “two heads are better than one,” and many are better than two! In this section, we summarize the wide variety of outcomes reported in the literature. Like the motivations described earlier, some of these outcomes are sector-specific, while others benefit all partners and even the planet, in terms of improvements in sustainable practices. Such outcomes have been referred to as “environmental-centric” outcomes — defined as “unexpected outcomes related to the ecological, economic, governmental, legal, political, regulatory, social, and/or technological environments beyond the context of those involving the focal issue(s) of the collaboration.”¹⁷⁸ These authors and others¹⁷⁹ also

note that there are individual outcomes that accrue to those who serve as partnership representatives such as learning, enhanced organizational status and networking. In Table 4, Partnership Outcomes, we summarize the collective outcomes of partnering and the outcomes that accrue to each sector.

Additionally, although different types of partnerships are designed to produce different short-term outcomes (e.g. governance vs. corporate innovation), in many cases, the long-term results begin to converge and spill over into other sectors. For example, Loblaw’s Sustainable Seafood Initiative with WWF has led the firm to make short-term decisions about which fish to sell in its stores at any given time. Loblaw elected to carry sustainable cod, which has been virtually unavailable recently. However, this shortage prompted a longer-term partnership between WWF, the Canadian government and representatives from fish processors and fishing unions to participate in fisheries’ improvement plans in Eastern Canada — a co-management process that will eventually have payoffs for Loblaw and many other stakeholders.

OUTCOMES FOR BUSINESS

As we noted in the discussion of motivations (p. 31), the early outcomes that many businesses sought from partnering were improvements in their Sustainability reputations that would assure them a licence to operate. Plentiful evidence shows that partnerships have in many cases generated such improvements.¹⁸⁰ Reputational gains are especially likely when partnership efforts result

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Clarke & Fuller, 2010: 91.

¹⁷⁹ Harrison & Easton, 2002; Kolk et al., 2010

¹⁸⁰ Yarnold, 2007; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Kolk, 2010.

Table 4

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES BY SECTOR

	BUSINESS	NGOs	GOVERNMENT	COMMUNITY	ENVIRONMENT
Positive	Improve CSR reputation; ensure licence to operate	Greater focus on efficiency and accountability	Improved project designs	Greater voice in policymaking	Environmental advocacy
	Supply chain improvements		Greater transparency and acceptance of plans	Improved quality of life	Deal with complexity
	Innovative products	Enhanced reputation	More efficient resource usage	Gain models that can be used for other projects	Institutionalized attention to problem
	New markets		Strengthen data management		
	Attractiveness to employees	Achieve needed funding	Meet sustainability targets	Integrated service delivery	Environmental conditions improved
	Gain critical competencies		Garner greater public accountability	Retain control of lives	
	Integrate sustainability in core business practices		Insight into economic and demographic trends	Gain culturally suitable products and outputs	
	De facto rules for regulating industries		Improve interagency coordination	Build networks for self-reliance	
Negative	Perceptions of greenwashing	Suffer tainted reputation	Need to deal with conflict	Inequitable outcomes	Continued degradation
		Cooptation	Less thorough study of research	Need to balance subgroup vs. greater public interest	Replacement of nature with human-produced products
			Reduced funds		

in other outcomes, such as the advent of new products or changes in corporate supply chains. Thus, in addition to reputational benefits, businesses can gain “critical competencies,” gain new knowledge about existing problems, identify new problems and opportunities (e.g. for products or markets), increase networking and social capital, and enhance their attractiveness to existing and potential employees.¹⁸¹

Positive outcomes for businesses increase when the partnership is widely publicized within the firm and both top management and employees are engaged. “Only then will they yield desired company benefits, such as an enhanced corporate image, reputation, higher product sales, and increased attractiveness to (potential) employees, and also be effective in reaching non-profits’ and societal goals.”¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Austin, 2000a; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Kolk, 2010.

¹⁸² Kolk, 2010: 8.

Some scholars writing about evaluating partnerships make an important distinction among outputs, outcomes and impacts.¹⁸³ Outputs refer to distribution of goods or services (e.g. repair of roads or distribution of books), whereas outcomes encompass new practices and behaviours (e.g. new procedures for recycling waste). Impacts, which are the most difficult of the three to measure, capture improvements in sustainability (e.g. reduced air pollution) or in material well-being (e.g. reduction in infant mortality rates).

Long-term outcomes are also illustrated in voluntary environmental programs (VEPs) that “foster collaborative relationships between government and the regulated community while promoting environmental learning and capacity-building. In the short-term these activities may not lead to pollution reductions, but they may create a foundation for long-term environmental management improvements.”¹⁸⁴ For example, in some programs, the “declared intention of the partnership was to create rules for a well-defined domain of activities intended for application to those involved in such activities, whether private commercial actors or public governmental or intergovernmental bodies.”¹⁸⁵ Examples of such partnerships are the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, the Forest and Marine Stewardship Councils, the Equator Principles, the International Council on Mining and Metals, the Global Reporting Initiative and the World Commission on Dams. Most VEPs do not set out to establish new forms of governance for a sector. Nonetheless, both the UK-based Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and the US-based Fair Labor Association (FLA)

have created de facto rules of the game for how many retailers and their suppliers approach labour standards. “Both the ETI and FLA have, with other initiatives, created a new governance environment for labor standards linked to, but operating independently from, existing bodies of agreed international labor standards, or indeed national labor law and the statutory means by which these standards are, or should be, enforced. Both have, in practice, mutated into ‘governance micro-climates’.”¹⁸⁶ With respect to legitimacy, these non-statutory collaborative governance approaches have also created some public good because they have “overcome the historically confrontational, inflexible, and self-limiting basis on which the social contract between business and society has been defined and outcomes created” in the past.¹⁸⁷

OUTCOMES FOR NGOS

A key outcome of importance to NGOs is the acquisition of resources (including investments, goods, services, a greater base of volunteers, and technical and managerial expertise) to ensure their continued operation.¹⁸⁸ According to Suarez,¹⁸⁹ NGOs have increasingly become focused on greater efficiency and effectiveness, both in their operations and in developing accountability standards to assure their supporters that they are meeting their strategic objectives. Partnerships can provide them with business strategies and models for rationalizing their operations.

¹⁸³ Brown, 2008; Kolk et al., 2012.

¹⁸⁴ Darnall & Carmin, 2005: 86.

¹⁸⁵ Zadek, 2008: 375.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Zadek, 2008: 378.

¹⁸⁸ Austin, 2000a; Kolk et al., 2010.

¹⁸⁹ Suárez, 2011.

NGOs also stand to improve their reputations through partnerships in that they are able to bring additional resources to bear on the causes they champion. Environmental Defense, for example, has seen an exponential growth in its operating funds and reputation as a result of its many partnering efforts. The biggest risk noted for NGOs in partnerships is a tarnished reputation should they align with a corporate partner who fails to deliver the level of commitment needed to effect real change.¹⁹⁰ For example, Friends of the Earth does not partner with business because it is “wary of the risk of ‘green wash’ that could stem from business collaboration.”¹⁹¹ In general, research finds the risks of partnering to be higher for NGOs than for businesses.¹⁹² The greatest downside for NGOs is cooptation: being used by the business for reputational gain without any enhancement of their own goals.

OUTCOMES FOR GOVERNMENT

A desirable outcome for governments is finding ways to ensure that they meet their sustainability targets. This means that various constituents need to agree on action plans for protecting resources in the future. Often this also means finding ways to reconcile various stakeholders’ competing interests.¹⁹³ The good news is that “participatory approaches have demonstrated their value and viability.”¹⁹⁴ For example, a report by

a World Conservation Union working group to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests observed: “In many countries, community involvement is proving to be a cost-effective, socially just, and environmentally sound approach to stabilizing natural forests.”¹⁹⁵ In addition to achieving greater sustainability, governments can benefit from being able to depend on the “certainty of the process, knowing when the review process has ended, improved project design through meaningful public participation in the design stages, and greater project acceptance in affected communities.”¹⁹⁶ These outcomes, of course, depend on the use of collaborative governance processes characterized by high levels of participation and constructive resolution of conflicts. Processes that were deemed unsuccessful often could not find common ground among long-standing adversaries or simply engaged in contractual exchanges without real citizen input.¹⁹⁷

Through partnering, governments can also gain greater insight into economic and demographic trends, improve their public accountability and improve coordination with other agencies.¹⁹⁸ On the technical side, they can strengthen their data management process and information infrastructure.¹⁹⁹ According to Margerum,²⁰⁰ “the nested collaboration approach also has the advantage of encouraging innovation and allowing flexibility by providing clearer direction from the

¹⁹⁰ Argenti, 2004; Millar, Choi, & Chen, 2004; Yaziji & Doh, 2009.

¹⁹¹ Åhlström & Sjöström, 2005: 233.

¹⁹² Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b.

¹⁹³ Bingham & O’Leary, 2006; Brown, 2008.

¹⁹⁴ Castro & Nielsen, 2001: 231.

¹⁹⁵ Poffenberger, 1996: 2.

¹⁹⁶ Doelle & Sinclair, 2006: 204.

¹⁹⁷ Andrews & Entwistle, 2010.

¹⁹⁸ Provan, Huang & Milward, 2009; Smith & Roberts, 2003.

¹⁹⁹ Smith & Roberts, 2003.

²⁰⁰ Margerum, 2007: 137.

policy level.” In the face of broad trends in governance toward decentralization and economic liberalization and shrinking budgets,²⁰¹ co-management and collaborative governance approaches seem both necessary and inevitable for government agencies. Such efforts may also be aided by sponsorship of university research on key issues.

OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES

Wheeler et al.²⁰² report 50 examples of local networks that have developed to provide increased income to local people in poverty through partnerships with entrepreneurs, NGOs and governments. While other partners view communities as outlets for products or suppliers for their own economic endeavours, communities themselves view partnerships “as routes to individual or community self-reliance. Commercial investors, financial institutions and businesses saw the payoffs primarily in terms of profits and returns on investment but often also in terms of a fulfilling a social mission or sustainable development mandate. Development agencies and donors saw the potential for enhanced quality of life through human development and ecological enhancement.”²⁰³ “The World Bank’s Voices of the Poor survey reveals that low-income people have clear hopes that commercial enterprises will provide livelihoods for them and their families.”²⁰⁴

Co-management processes have the potential to give local community members an increased sense

of control over their lives, as in the decisions about the Lockyer catchment area in Queensland, Australia, which met both irrigators’ concerns for equity and the government’s sustainability commitments. This successful outcome was accomplished by allowing irrigators to participate in detailed negotiations about water allocations that directly affected their livelihoods.²⁰⁵

In developing countries accomplishing this kind of power-sharing is more difficult, however. Understanding the local culture and social expectations is critical to success in partnering in poverty-ridden economies. London and Rondinelli²⁰⁶ detail a variety of characteristics that distinguish successful from unsuccessful business initiatives in such settings. Ventures fail because they misjudge the market environment and do not consider the interests of local partners. Successful firms, on the other hand, develop pricing structures appropriate for the market²⁰⁷ and devise and distribute “enabling artifacts,” such as solar-powered stoves and quality-of-life enhancing social structures (e.g. teaching communities how to set up a daycare facility).²⁰⁸

Governments too must play a role if local communities are to benefit from partnership efforts. “The 2004 report of the U.N. Commission on the Private Sector and Development argued that the public sector must foster property rights, simplify regulatory and fiscal systems, apply the rule of law and ensure transparency and good

²⁰¹ Castro & Neilsen, 2001.

²⁰² Wheeler et al., 2005.

²⁰³ Ibid: 37.

²⁰⁴ Narayan et al., 2000; cited in Wheeler et al., 2005.

²⁰⁵ Baldwin & Ross, 2012.

²⁰⁶ London & Rondinelli, 2003.

²⁰⁷ London & Rondinelli, 2003

²⁰⁸ Pearce, Albritton, Grant, Steed, Zelenika, 2012.

governance in developing countries in order to ‘level the playing field’ and enable entrepreneurship to flourish. The report’s authors also pointed to the importance of reforming financial services, improving access to capital and developing human skills and knowledge. This is an excellent starting point for more specific recommendations about opportunities for meaningful, high-leverage investments in human, social, financial and ecological capital at both the global and local levels.”²⁰⁹ In 2012, the International Finance Corporation also revised its sustainability criteria for judging its internal investments, noting that “low-income countries need to finance an enormous investment gap in order to achieve sustainable growth.”²¹⁰

Ensuring a participatory rather than a service focus is critical if partnerships are to significantly enhance the voice of less powerful communities.²¹¹ However, care must also be taken not to advance the interests of one particular subgroup over another, since such action can conflict with the broader public interest.²¹²

OUTCOMES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

While no final evaluation is possible of the long-term impacts of multi-sector partnerships on the environment, the resounding conclusion of the majority of studies we reviewed was that partnerships provide the best chance of bringing the necessary resources, technology and commitment to ensuring a sustainable future for the planet. Evidence of multi-sector

partnerships’ effectiveness at this stage, however, is largely anecdotal and prescriptive. If the cases reported in Appendix F are indicative of the wide array of sustainability partnerships completed and underway, at least small environmental improvements have been documented in the literature, including reducing carbon footprints, using less energy, reducing waste, and carefully managing natural resources. Such phrases as “sound outcomes” and “substantial reductions” appear repeatedly, and the practice of garnering widespread, multi-sectoral commitment to these efforts seems accepted. “The basic concept is that a planning and approval process that has to consider all interests affected by it equally and fairly, is much more likely to produce a contribution to sustainability than a project assessment that aims only to mitigate the negative effects of an already formed and proposed project.”²¹³ As David Yarnold of Environmental Defense concluded: “The environment is not a special interest, it’s a public interest. And partnerships like these are milestones on the road to a new brand of environmental advocacy.”²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ Wheeler et al., 2005: 38.

²¹⁰ International Finance Corporation, 2012.

²¹¹ Andrews & Entwistle, 2010.

²¹² Brecher & Wise, 2008.

²¹³ Doelle & Sinclair, 2006: 188.

²¹⁴ Yarnold, 2007: 24.

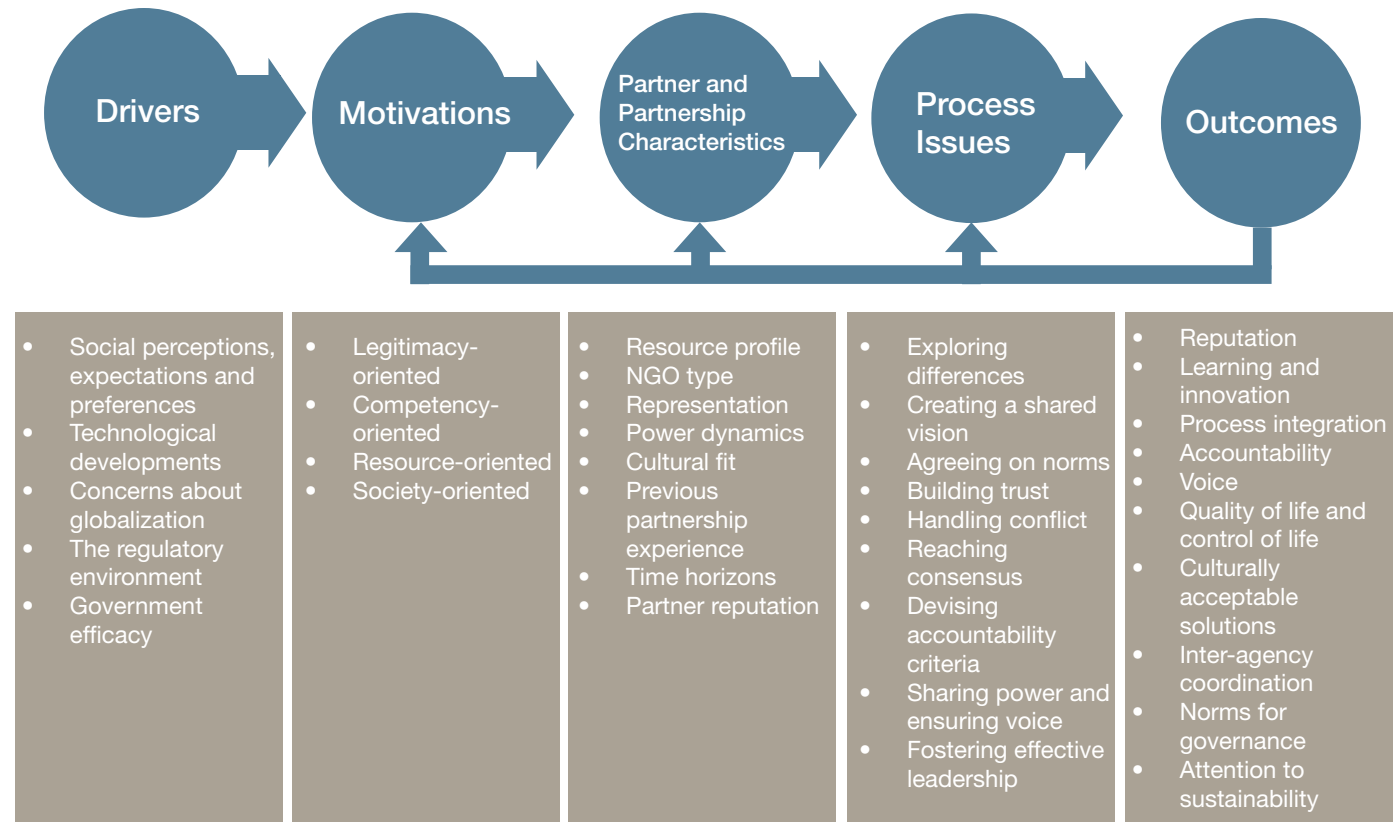
Summary of Model

Drawing on the above discussion of factors that affect partnership outcomes, we offer Figure 8, Summary Model of Factors Affecting Outcomes. Here we incorporate the key points pertaining to each of four factors that influence partnership outcomes. The

arrows in the figure suggest that there may well be reciprocal effects over time. That is, the outcomes of one partnership experience may influence partners' choices about working together in the future, in terms of whom they choose as partners, how they structure the partnership and how they design the process.

Figure 8

SUMMARY MODEL OF FACTORS AFFECTING OUTCOMES



Case Examples

Both literatures we reviewed provided many case examples. Often a single article mentioned or critiqued several case studies in detail. An in-depth analysis of all these cases is beyond the scope of the project. However, the Table in Appendix F provides a brief summary of almost 150 cases for which sufficient information was available to make a brief assessment of them. Here we introduce two cases in some depth because they illustrate the key ideas just presented about, respectively, how process can affect outcomes and the importance of attending to process dynamics as complex partnerships progress.

EXAMPLE #1: RABOBANK, WWF AND FOEN²¹⁵

In 2006, Rabobank, a group of independent banks in the Netherlands founded on cooperative principles but relying on private investors, teamed up with the World Wildlife Fund for Nature Netherlands (abbreviated WFN in Dutch), a nature conservancy NGO, to launch a climate-neutral credit card. The substantive negotiations had to address two issues: (1) the footprint calculation method and (2) the compensation method. For the former, they settled on an existing footprint calculation tool; for the latter, they agreed to buy international clean development mechanism (CDM) credits.

Concurrent with these efforts, Friends of the Earth Netherlands (FoEN) released a report in which it criticized all major Dutch banks for investments in

non-sustainable industries. FoEN targeted Rabobank for investments in soy and palm oil that had large carbon footprints. In contrast with its competitors who resisted pressure from FoEN, Rabobank began to meet with both FoEN and WFN to discuss what credible criteria it could use to assess the sustainability of its portfolio. After finding existing criteria that were acceptable to all partners, Rabobank conducted a thorough appraisal of its investment portfolio, revamped its investment strategy to meet the criteria and shed some investments it deemed unacceptable, albeit to the chagrin of some customers. As a consequence, Rabobank gained recognition as having the best CSR reputation among all major Dutch banks.

The two NGOs, which had initially engaged in separate strategies to influence the bank, eventually worked together to effect positive outcomes for both their causes while also enabling Rabobank to gain reputational advantages over its competitors. WFN used “the carrot approach” by developing an internal working relationship with the bank and jointly developed change. In contrast, FoEN, wielding “a stick,” developed an arm’s-length relationship with Rabobank initially by exposing it publicly for its perceived misdeeds. Nonetheless, FoEN was able to accomplish both deinstitutionalization of practices it wanted to stop and formalization of practices it wanted to encourage (e.g. the bank’s influencing its customers to reduce their carbon footprints).

In this case, the strategy of each NGO may have helped the other. “FoEN’s symbolic damage strategy supported the success of WFN’s symbolic gain strategy. This reinforcing effect between ‘the carrot’

²¹⁵ Data for this case are drawn from Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010.

and 'the stick' has been recognized in social movement literature and labeled 'radical flank effect',²¹⁶ referring to the credibility boost given to moderate social movement groups by the presence of more radical ones. On the flip side, the bank's earlier work with WFN may have given it an advantage in negotiations with FoEN.

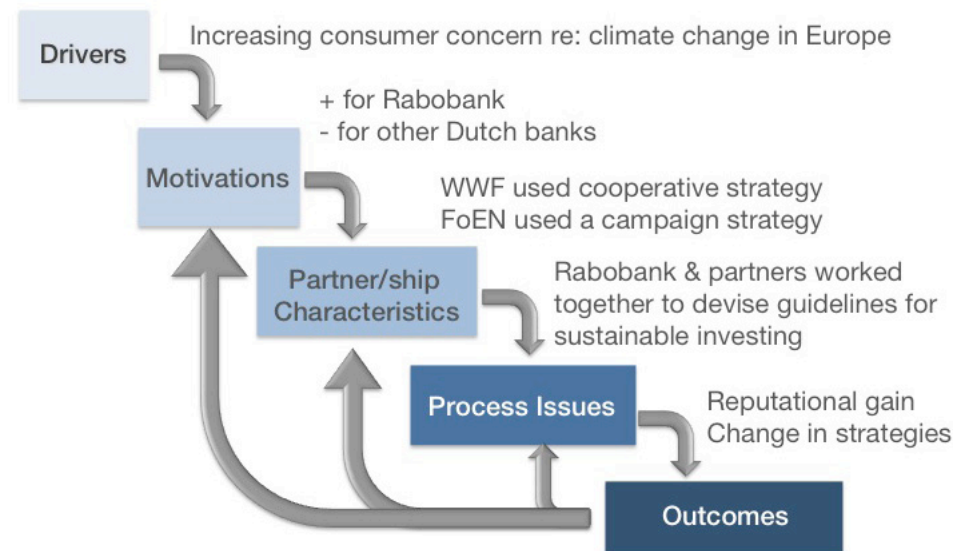
In Figure 9, we illustrate the key factors that shaped the outcomes in Rabobank's partnerships with WFN and FoEN. The arrows from outcomes back to process issues, partner and partnership characteristics and motivations are intended to convey how the initial partnership with WFN influenced the second partnership (between Rabobank and FoEN).

EXAMPLE #2: CANADIAN BOREAL FOREST AGREEMENT

In May 2010, an agreement was reached that was intended to protect large areas of wilderness in the Canadian boreal forest. The forest stretches almost all the way across Canada and is critical habitat of the woodland caribou. The agreement was reached among nine environmental groups and 21 forest companies in the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC). It created new environmental standards for forest management for 72 million hectares of the boreal forest, including a moratorium on logging in 28 million hectares where the caribou reside. Parties to the agreement are listed in Table 5, Signatories to the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement.

Figure 9

KEY FACTORS IN THE OUTCOMES OF THE RABOBANK PARTNERSHIP



²¹⁶ Haines, 1984; van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010b: 611.

Table 5

SIGNATORIES TO THE CANADIAN BOREAL FOREST AGREEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS	TIMBER COMPANIES REPRESENTED BY FPAC
Greenpeace, Canadian Boreal Initiative, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Canopy (formerly Markets Initiative), the David Suzuki Foundation, ForestEthics, the Ivey Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the Pew Environment Group's International Boreal Conservation Campaign	AbitibiBowater, Alberta Pacific Forest Industries, AV Group, Canfor, Cariboo Pulp & Paper Company, Cascades Inc., DMI, F.F. Soucy, Inc., Howe Sound Pulp and Paper, Kruger Inc., LP Canada, Mercer International, Mill & Timber Products Ltd., NewPage Port Hawkesbury Ltd., Paper Masson Ltee., SFK Pulp; Tembec Inc., Tolko Industries, West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd., Weyerhaeuser Company Limited.

The agreement, called the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA), was reached after months of negotiations among the parties. According to the agreement, the key goals are to:

1. Implement world-leading sustainable forest management practices.
2. Accelerate the completion of the protected spaces network for the boreal forest.
3. Fast-track plans to protect boreal forest species at risk, particularly woodland caribou.
4. Take action on climate change as it relates to forest conservation.
5. Improve the prosperity of the Canadian forest sector and communities that rely on it.
6. Promote and publicize the environmental performance of the participating companies.

Another outcome of the agreement was a promise from the environmental NGOs involved that they would stop boycotting the forest products companies that are signatories to the agreement. This promise came in exchange for a suspension of logging operations on almost 29 million hectares of the forest — the area

inhabited by boreal caribou. During the suspension, the signatories agreed to develop action plans for caribou recovery in certain places and to generate guidelines for improving ecosystem management and forestry practices.

As the overall plan is implemented, it will involve negotiations among many other stakeholders, including Aboriginal groups, affected communities, and municipal, provincial and federal governments. Agreements will be recommended to these governments to incorporate into formal forestry management plans and other on-going public planning processes. A three-year timeline for completing conservation planning has been set, and the involvement of First Nations will be critical in achieving implementation.

At a news conference in November 2011, Avrim Lazar, President and CEO of FPAC, emphasized the importance of the agreement for the industry and its future in the global market: “FPAC member companies and their ENGO counterparts have turned the old paradigm on its head. Together we have identified a

more intelligent, productive way to manage economic and environmental challenges in the boreal that will reassure global buyers of our products' sustainability. It's gratifying to see nearly a decade of industry transformation and hard work greening our operations is culminating in a process that will set a forestry standard that will be the envy of the world." At the same news conference, Richard Brooks, Greenpeace forest campaign coordinator, stated, "This is our best chance to save woodland caribou, permanently protect vast areas of the boreal forest and put in place sustainable forestry. The interest of the marketplace and public has been critical in this agreement. We have a lot of work to do together to make this agreement successful, and we are committed to make it happen."

The accounting firm KPMG was hired to evaluate the actions taken toward implementing the agreement and to provide annual reports on the progress. According to its first-year report, CBFA had begun work on all five of the six goals it had targeted for its first year. However, the report noted that "progress-to-date in relation to the milestone completion timeframes anticipated in the CBFA is lagging" and that only five of the 20 milestones had been met.²¹⁷ While acknowledging that the CBFA had set ambitious goals and milestone targets for its work, the KPMG report urged that additional resources be secured, if necessary, in order for the project to stay on target.

KPMG also reported that a special "Undercurrents" forum had been created to allow the signatories to air concerns that had arisen for various parties during

²¹⁷ KPMG, 2011.

²¹⁸ Myles, 2012.

²¹⁹ Myles, 2012.

the first year. The forum was a facilitated discussion in which the signatories reaffirmed their commitment to certain parts of the original agreement. In particular, they agreed to keep both their communications to the public and their private communications to governments consistent with the agreement and to raise any objections to future CBFA decisions during their deliberations to ensure that the CBFA spoke as one voice once a decision was taken. Additionally, signatories agreed to regular "Undercurrents" meetings going forward.

Despite these conflict resolution efforts, in December 2012, Greenpeace reversed its stance on the Boreal Forest Agreement, citing lack of sufficient progress toward the agreement's objectives and, specifically, Resolute Forest Products (formerly AbitibiBowater) logging in Quebec's Montagnes Blanches region, in violation of the CBFA.²¹⁸ While Greenpeace promised to continue to work with logging companies that were committed to greater forest protection (as in collaborative agreements it has in Canada's Great Bear Rainforest, Brazil's Amazon and Indonesia), it was criticized by another environmental NGO, Ecological Internet (EI), for signing an agreement (the CBFA), which EI believes favoured logging over conservation.²¹⁹

The scope of the CBFA, in terms of number of stakeholders and land mass involved, makes it a particularly complex example of business-NGO partnering. Not only are multiple committees involved in implementing the agreement, but new partners are being added as CBFA engages Canadian provincial

and First Nations' governments in an effort to influence ongoing planning initiatives. The process issues described earlier in the report are magnified as multiple partners work in different arenas. Misunderstandings, misinterpretations of others' actions and potential violations of the original agreement have the potential to erode trust among the signatories unless CBFA vigilantly maintains monitoring of compliance and recommitment to the guiding principles. It must also build room for renegotiation in the face of unanticipated obstacles into ongoing implementation efforts.

Finding an Optimal Agreement

In order to build an optimal partnership agreement, it is useful to be able to envision the decision space that is available to the parties and to link that space with the processes by which such agreements may emerge. In Figure 10, Space of Optimal Agreements (next page), we depict a negotiation between two partners: an NGO (whose goals are reflected on the X axis) and a business (whose goals are reflected on the Y axis).

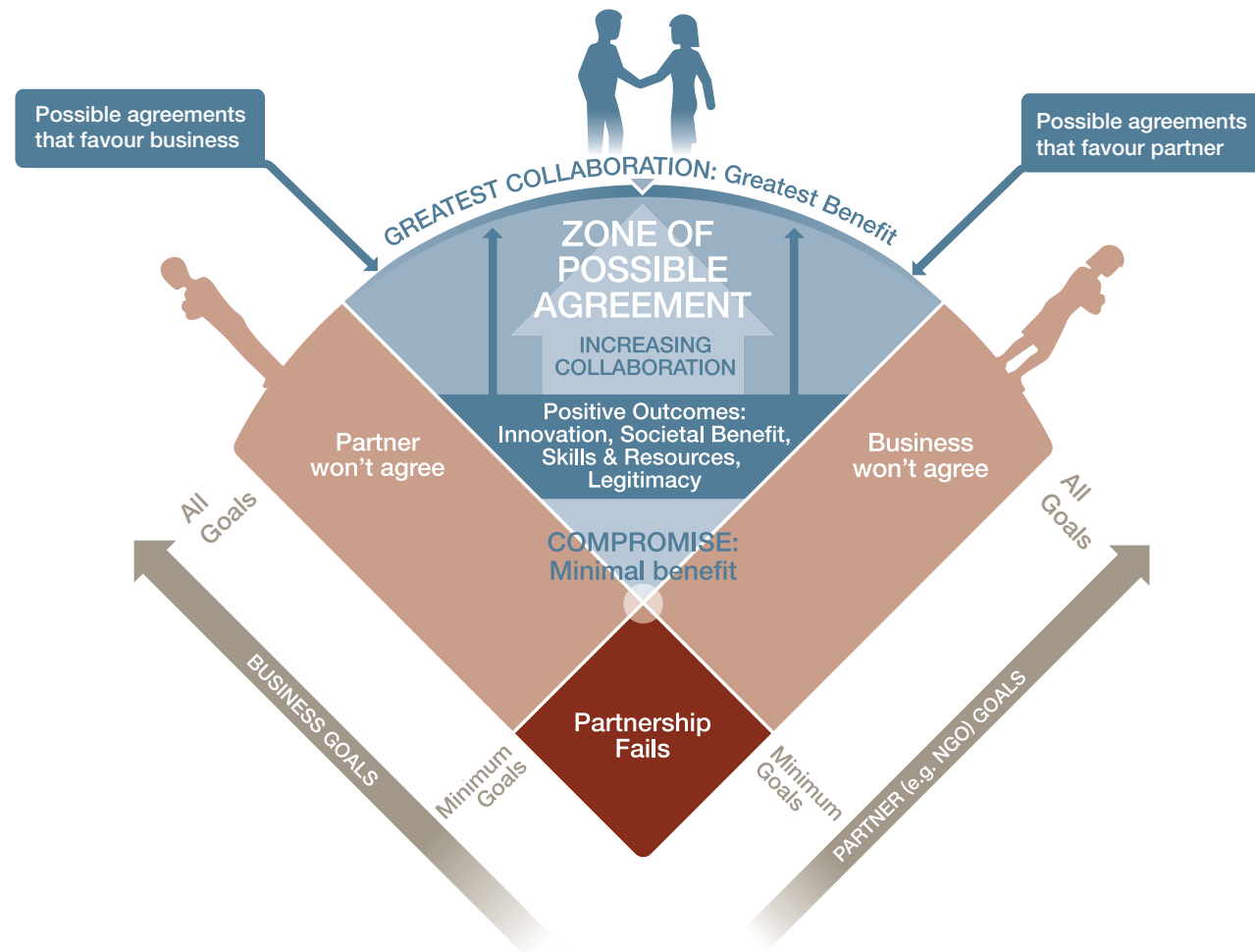
For an NGO to be satisfied with a partnership agreement, the agreement must fall above the point in Figure 10 designated "minimum goals." Similarly, for the business to be satisfied with an agreement, it must fall above the point marked "mimumum goals." Therefore, any agreements within the dark square would not be viable, leading the partnership to fail. The range of possible agreements that would satisfy both parties falls within the Zone of Possible Agreement. An agreement at the compromise point is the minimum agreement possible between the two partners.

²²⁰ Lax & Sebenius, 1985.

However, it is conceivable that the parties can do better than compromise and secure an agreement above the compromise point. The agreement that creates the most value for both partners and in which value is distributed between them falls on the pareto optimal frontier.²²⁰ The pareto optimal frontier represents the limits of possible agreements that are feasible in the decision space. Agreements that fall into the side columns are highly unlikely because they fail to meet the minimum goals of the NGO or the business, respectively, and therefore would not be agreed to by either party.

Figure 10

SPACE OF OPTIMAL AGREEMENTS

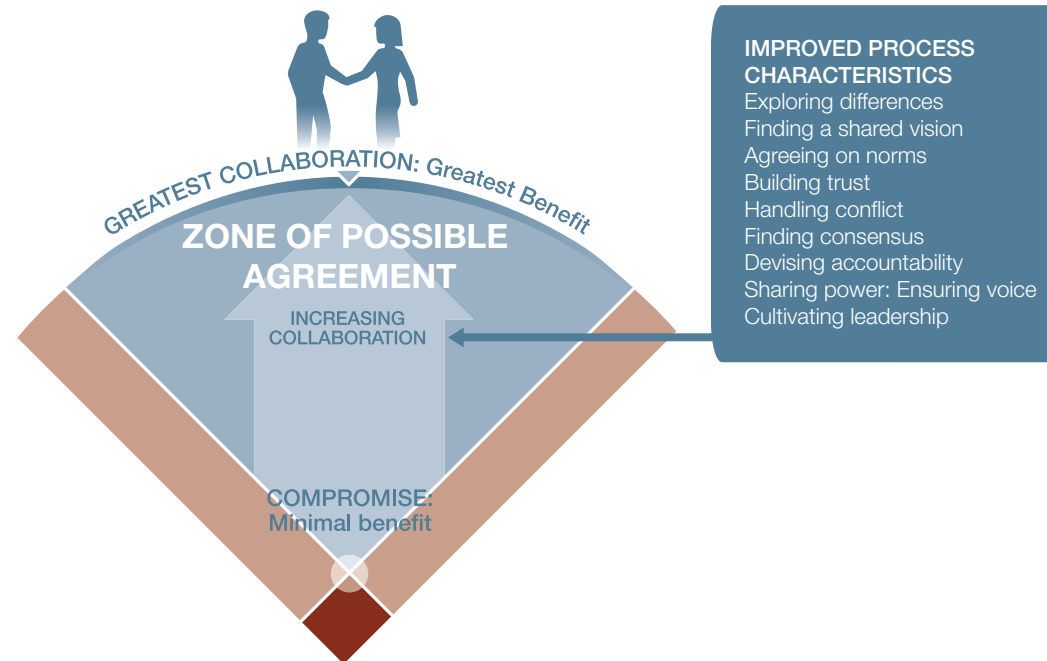


Reaching the most optimal agreement may take some time to build a relationship and may require the two parties to fully consider what is important to them and to their partner. Thus, the process issues discussed above become especially important if the two partners are to move from a compromise agreement along the white dotted line toward the pareto frontier. This movement is depicted in Figure 11, Finding an Optimal Agreement.

Win-win solutions are those that foster “collaborative advantage”²²¹ or “partnership alchemy.”²²² To create this type of win-win solution for both partners, partnerships must aim to “strategically leverage the core competencies of both partners to address market failure or social opportunity and thus engender social innovation.”²²³ This process may involve accessing broader networks, combining complementary resources and expertise, and sharing good practice in order to accomplish the sustainability objectives of both partners.²²⁴

Figure 11

FINDING AN OPTIMAL AGREEMENT



²²¹ Huxham, 1996: 1.

²²² Nelson & Zadek, 2000: 13.

²²³ Le Ber & Branzei, 2010a: 141.

²²⁴ Lee, 2011: 30.

chapter 4: best practices and recommendations

We offer recommendations for all organizations involved in partnerships: business, NGOs, government, and communities and indigenous peoples.

In this chapter, we offer recommendations for organizations considering embarking on partnerships for the first time and organizations wanting to improve their performance as partners. First, we offer eight recommendations that are useful for all partners. Next, we offer three recommendations for businesses who pursue partnerships with NGOs and/or other sectoral partners. Following this are three recommendations for NGOs and four for governments that seek to initiate collaborative governance arrangements. Finally, we present three recommendations for communities and indigenous peoples who have often been either excluded from or marginalized during participation in past multi-sectoral dialogues.

Recommendations for All Partners

Recommendation #1: Adopt a problem-centric rather than a firm-centric model of stakeholders.

While business is often placed at the centre of stakeholder models and other partners are viewed only in terms of their relationship to business, because of the complex and interconnected nature of sustainability, we advocate a problem-centric, rather than a firm-centric perspective. As Figure 3 depicts, partnerships may be formed by various combinations of sectoral partners and in some cases may not involve the business sector at all. As Rowley²²⁵ found in his study of stakeholder networks, “The focal organization is more than simply the central point of its own stakeholders: it is also a

²²⁵ Rowley, 1997: 892.

²²⁶ Gray, 1989.

²²⁷ Lockie, 2007: 793.

stakeholder of many other focal points in its relevant social system. The organization is not necessarily at the center of the network; therefore, treating its position as a variable in its complex social system provides one with an opportunity to understand more fully how patterns of stakeholder interactions impact the organization.” The appropriate set of stakeholders for addressing the issue can be identified by drawing a boundary around the problem, issue or opportunity of interest and identifying those actors who are affected by it (either by creating it or being impacted by others’ actions with regard to it).²²⁶ Ensuring that these players engage the issue offers the greatest likelihood for truly collaborative and sustainable outcomes to emerge from their interactions.

Recommendation #2: For collaborative partnerships, frame the partnership as an intentional and continuous learning process.

Partnerships can serve as learning laboratories for all stakeholders involved. Their individual and collective learning provides the grist for sustainability improvements. Consequently, the value of developing a learning mindset among all partners from the inception of the partnership should be clear, but is captured well in these words by Lockie²²⁷: “The overriding lesson...is that a way forward can be found when the space is created for people to meet in a civilized and constructive atmosphere, listen to each other with mutual respect and together decompose the problems into their component parts and construct appropriate solutions.”

Recommendation #3: From the outset, pay attention to process issues and seek outside help to design fair and impartial processes to which all participants subscribe. Anticipate conflicts as normal and to be expected BUT design in dispute resolution procedures initially and identify resources to provide them.

Being process savvy is a critical skill for ensuring partnership success. Countless scholars and practitioners stress the importance of designing processes that employ open participation rules and transparency and consensus in decision making,²²⁸ no matter what type of partnership is undertaken. Compelling evidence from comparison of numerous cases consistently points to process management as key to partnership success.²²⁹

“What distinguishes situations where natural resources have been managed sustainably over long periods of time from those that have not is that the agencies and stakeholder involved have developed ways to communicate and interact with each other.²³⁰ These groups have also developed the ability to learn whom to trust and about the effects that their actions have on each other and on the resource, and they have developed norms, patterns of reciprocity, and institutions to solve problems and conflicts.”²³¹ Failure to anticipate and constructively manage conflicts also counts among the top explanations for unsuccessful partnering.²³²

²²⁸ Sabatier, Leach, Lubell & Pelkey, 2005.

²²⁹ Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000.

²³⁰ Dryzek, 1996.

²³¹ Lockie, 2007: 790.

²³² Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Arts, 2002.

²³³ Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, 2003: 4.

Recommendation #4: Don't expect to come up with a quick solution.

Capitalizing on the full extent of each partner's knowledge and skills does not happen overnight. This need for time is especially true when partners initially need to reconcile what might appear to be conflicting definitions of sustainability and divergent goals for the partnership. Allowing the time to work through these issues and search for complementary interests is more likely to produce favourable outcomes for both partners in the long run.

Recommendation #5: Ensure that all parties affected by the decisions have a fair voice in the partnership deliberations.

The role of fairness and inclusiveness in dialogues among partners was emphasized in a recent draft of Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility: Bench Marks for Measuring Business Performance,²³³ created by the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) and other allies in the shareholder activism movement in Canada, the United Kingdom, and various less-developed countries. The principles state: “In our understanding of global corporate responsibility, the community rather than the company is the starting point of economic life. For the community to be sustainable, all members need to be recognized, i.e. consumers, employees, shareholders, the community at large, and

corporations. Respect for each group's essential role in the economic and social life of the community will facilitate more just relationships locally and globally."²³⁴ Similarly, VanSandt and Sud²³⁵ note that the poor "must be viewed as more than an additional set of consumers for a firm's products and services — they must also be recognized as valuable producers, employees, and service providers themselves." They go on to argue that poverty is not just an economic phenomenon; it is multidimensional, touching all aspects of the lives of those at the "Base of the Pyramid" (BoP).²³⁶ Because of this comprehensive effect, the poor have little means of representing themselves in corporate networks, making the role of NGOs imperative in voicing their needs through partnerships.

Recommendation #6: Discuss and agree on explicit evaluation criteria early in the process of working together and devise exit criteria and be willing to shift roles as the partnership evolves.

The importance of agreeing on evaluation criteria and designing procedures for monitoring progress into the partnership's process has already been highlighted in the earlier discussion of process.²³⁷ Additionally, Cheng²³⁸ stressed the need to evaluate the process itself, in addition to progress toward objectives, to ensure that the partners' interactions remain transparent, credible and constructive for all involved. Regular evaluation and monitoring procedures allow the

partners to reassess the relationship between value and risk afforded by the partnership for each of them. This assessment may also lead partners to recalibrate their respective roles²³⁹ as partnerships progress from one stage to another, to ensure that each partner is meeting its individual goals and that the requisite resources are being devoted to the partners' shared vision. These evaluation activities foster trust within the partnership and enhance its credibility with external audiences.²⁴⁰ They also enable partners to exercise appropriate exit strategies if the partnership has failed to achieve its purpose and to determine whether future engagement with these partners is warranted.

Recommendation #7: Make sure that representatives have decision making authority or that a process for addressing the two-table problem has been agreed on.

The two-table problem in negotiation refers to the need for representatives to a negotiating table to report back to (and possibly ratify agreements with) their constituents after reaching agreement at the primary table. When the extent of representatives' authority is not clear to all involved, mistrust may arise or increase because partners may believe their initial expectations have been violated. It is well worth taking time in the early stages of the partnership formation to clarify the processes for getting "back home" input or authorization to support the overall execution of decisions made by the partnership members.

²³⁴ ICCR, 2003: 4, cited in van Buren, 2003: 67.

²³⁵ VanSandt & Sud, 2012: 322.

²³⁶ Prahalad, 2004; Prahalad and Hart, 2002.

²³⁷ Cornelius & Wallace, 2010; Esteves & Barclay, 2002.

²³⁸ Cheng & Sturtevant, 2012.

²³⁹ Le Ber & Branzei, 2010b.

²⁴⁰ Cheng & Sturtevant, 2012.

Recommendation #8: Develop leaders competent in partnership skills (e.g. convening, facilitation, mediation and multiplex thinking).

Several competencies have been identified for partners who aspire to collaborate. These include building sustainable relationships; managing through influence and negotiation; managing complexity and interdependencies; and managing roles, accountability and motivations.²⁴¹ “The skills that make up these competencies include communicating to create shared meaning, understanding, empathy, conflict resolution, networking, creativity, innovation, empowerment and building trust as the ‘lubricant’.”²⁴²

Recommendations for Business

Business Recommendation #1: Consider whether you’ve selected the correct partner for your organization’s partnership orientation.

Van Marrewijk et al.²⁴³ suggest that firms have choices to make about their CSR strategies and need to tailor their choices to the nature of the problem they are attempting to address. Before launching a partnership, a business should consider its own motivations for partnering, desirable partner characteristics and the implications of various process choices.

As we discussed above under partner characteristics, considerations such as size, reputation and experience of partners should be weighed as well as potential

²⁴¹ McGuire, 2006.

²⁴² McGuire, 2006: 38.

²⁴³ Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003.

²⁴⁴ Dahan, 2010.

²⁴⁵ Crane, 1998.

²⁴⁶ Dahan et al., 2010.

partners’ likely aims for learning and competency acquisition and the resources they can bring to the table. Dahan and colleagues²⁴⁴ also emphasize the importance of assessing organizational cultural differences, especially for ongoing alliances, because many failures have been attributed to mismatches on these dimensions. Crane²⁴⁵ also notes that companies need to balance the tension between retaining proprietary control of new technologies for sustainability and the wider benefits of sharing them with society at large. In the former case, the business would gain first-mover advantages vis a vis its competitors; in the second situation, the business would hasten broader societal progress toward sustainability by sharing the technological advances with competitors.

Business Recommendation #2: Consider consulting a wide array of stakeholders even if these conversations are unlikely to result in partnerships.

This recommendation complements the previous recommendation because stereotypes about other organizations are not necessarily borne out when organizations actually come together to work on a sustainability problem. Previewing what various partners can bring to the table and exploratory talks about what a possible partnership might look like can prove beneficial simply to get a wider base of reference from which to scope out possible approaches to solving a problem. Similarly, be open to a reconfiguration of the partnership over time, as new learning emerges and the need to involve other partners may become apparent.²⁴⁶

Business Recommendation #3: In cases where legitimacy of a partnership or project is likely to be challenged, involve reputable NGO and community stakeholders early in the design of the project.

We earlier included the example of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management involving the Pueblo tribe early in deliberations about how a national monument would be made available to the public. This need for early engagement also applies to other partnerships. In another example, in which a mining firm failed to heed this advice, Pratt²⁴⁷ emphasized the value of preventive vs. corrective actions, both for reducing potential unanticipated expenses or retrofitting and for good public relations. In many cases, the decision appears to be one of expediency vs. goodwill. Commenting on this type of trade-off, a McKinsey study²⁴⁸ found that, despite the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC)'s advice to include a broad range of stakeholders in partnerships, only 5 per cent of UNGC "Local Networks" engaged the full range of non-UN stakeholders and 58 per cent included only one partner. As Austin and Seitanidi²⁴⁹ propose, "the more collaborators perceive their self-interests as linked to the value they create for each other and for the larger social good, and the greater the perceived fairness in the sharing of that value, the greater the potential for co-creating value."

²⁴⁷ Pratt, 2001.

²⁴⁸ McKinsey, 2004.

²⁴⁹ Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a: 730.

²⁵⁰ Kramer & Kania, 2006.

²⁵¹ Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1991.

²⁵² Baur & Schmitz, 2012.

²⁵³ van Huijstee and Glasbergen, 2010b: 610.

Recommendations for NGOs

NGO Recommendation #1: Ask for more than money.

Kramer and Kania²⁵⁰ offered this recommendation. The reasoning is, as discussed earlier, NGOs stand to gain in many ways from partnering with business and other stakeholders: e.g. gaining new competencies, building capacity and in other aspects of their work. NGOs can help their causes by asking for these kinds of benefits for themselves and by insisting that the sustainability standards be raised not only for their partner but for an entire industry or supply chain. Since negotiation theory warns that you will not likely get what you don't ask for,²⁵¹ setting sights too low and not inviting others to share in lofty sustainability goals can limit NGOs' achievements through partnering.

NGO Recommendation #2: Consider using the carrot and stick approach by pairing with other NGOs with an orientation different from your own.

In the Rabobank case introduced earlier, two NGOs used the carrot and stick approach to influence the bank, capitalizing on the advantages of each. NGOs clearly have an important role to play as watchdogs because "they are seen as legitimate actors with valuable knowledge on the problems around which CSR centers."²⁵² By using a symbolic reputational damage strategy, their actions "can ignite policy developments" within firms and by governments.²⁵³

On the other hand, building a partnership “will be less feasible with an NGO that resorts to confrontational measures whenever necessary” because “trust is more easily built with an NGO that uses positive approaches toward business (i.e. a gain strategy)...[O]nce a company suspects that a specific NGO branch may use a symbolic damage strategy at any point during the dialogue process, a constructive setting is difficult to realize.”²⁵⁴ By pairing their strategies of symbolic gain and damage, however, two NGOs may collectively be able to gain considerable advantage.

NGO Recommendation #3: Share the halo with business, government and community partners.

While NGOs are clearly the champions of civil society and lead on many social and environmental initiatives, claiming all the glory associated with gains from a partnership can be short-sighted. As businesses come to realize the reputational and on-the-ground benefits of partnering with NGOs, communities and governments to create a more sustainable planet, they will understandably also want to gain reputational benefits associated with moving toward this vision.

Recommendations for Governments

Government Recommendation #1: Develop cooperative relationships among government agencies prior to forming partnerships so that interagency conflicts don't impede collaboration.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Margerum, 2007.

²⁵⁶ Doelle & Sinclair, 2006.

²⁵⁷ Doelle & Sinclair, 2006: 189.

²⁵⁸ Partidario & Sheate, 2013.

One issue that arose in many collaborative governance processes was a lack of connection between the various government agencies who were involved in a partnership. Since agencies often have different cultures related to their unique mandates, they often do not have smooth interagency working relationships when they join a new partnership. However, multi-sector forums create opportunities for agency officials to get each other's attention, to overcome inertia to become involved and to talk directly with each other about the issues of interest to their respective agencies and to the partnership as a whole.²⁵⁵ We encourage government agencies to network and to cultivate these relationships prior to embarking on joint partnerships whenever possible, or to design in processes for developing such relationships early in the collaborative governance process. Government agencies should also include other partners in these early explorations, which leads directly to our next recommendation for government.

Government Recommendation #2: To ensure transparency, involve stakeholders (especially communities) in the process as early as possible.

Drawing lessons from a Canadian environmental assessment process, Doelle and Sinclair²⁵⁶ highlighted the importance of early involvement of the public in the process. They note: “a fundamental problem is the lack of recognition of the need for early and ongoing participation and a lack of openness to rethink a project at the time the public is engaged.”²⁵⁷ Partidario and Sheate²⁵⁸ similarly emphasize the importance of early participation to finding viable solutions. Early

involvement enables participation in problem definition, which is critical because the problem's initially framing limits the range of alternatives considered to solve it.²⁵⁹

Government Recommendation #3: Build flexibility into any policy instruments that are adopted to allow for future contingencies and changing contexts.

This recommendation is based on experiences of collaborative governance in the Netherlands, from which Bressers and colleagues conclude²⁶⁰ “the experience of the Netherlands suggests that policy instruments that provide flexibility within a context ensuring that action — including possibly regulatory action — offer a more promising prospect than do purely voluntary policy options.” Implementing agreements in different contexts often requires adaptations to local conditions or to idiosyncratic decision processes among the stakeholder groups involved in each context. Allowing such flexibility will increase ownership and compliance by the groups involved.

Government Recommendation #4: Seek partners who will challenge conventional thinking.

In a related comment pertaining to the UN, one article argues that knowledge networks associated with the UN need to go beyond “best practice learning” and embrace “critical thinking,” which has waned within UN circles since the 1980s.²⁶¹ Another makes a case for the wisdom of involving government in processes initiated by private interests even though they may work at cross purposes because they need to be part of solution matrix.²⁶² We include this here to urge government to

²⁵⁹ van der Kerkhof, 2006.

²⁶⁰ Bressers, De Bruijn, & Lulofs, 2011: 203.

²⁶¹ Utting & Zammit, 2009: 39.

²⁶² Van Sandt & Sud, 2012: 322.

seek out partnerships among business and NGOs where they believe their expertise may add value to sustainability deliberations.

Recommendations for Communities and Indigenous People

Community Recommendation #1: Expect and ask for a seat at the table for problems that directly or indirectly affect the well-being of community members.

Perhaps the most frequent criticism of sustainability partnerships, especially those involving global problems or problems in the developing world, concerns marginalization or exclusion of communities and indigenous peoples from deliberations that have direct impacts on their current and future lives and well-being. While NGOs have begun to ensure that the voices of these marginalized actors are included in partnership proceedings, communities themselves need to organize to insist on a “place at the table.” This recommendation is not to suggest that simply asking will solve the problem, but communities do have some responsibility for developing clear expectations that they have a “right” to participate and are prepared to do so. Just as the environmental justice movement in the United States organized to draw attention to the disproportionate levels of environmental externalities borne by disadvantaged communities, so too

indigenous peoples and disadvantaged communities in developing countries need to increase their opportunities to shape answers to future sustainability challenges, perhaps most of all because they represent an important untapped source of creativity and innovation.

Community Recommendation #2: Ensure that ground rules for the partnership allow for adequate voice for all participants.

Partnerships can use several methods to build in assurance that all participants have opportunities for voice. First, parties can share leadership of the dialogue. Second, participation procedures can be built into the ground rules of a specific dialogue and can be reinforced through the legislative or executive functions of government. For example, Doelle and Sinclair²⁶³ advocate rethinking the legal underpinnings of public participation in Canadian Environmental Assessment legislation. They suggest that “changes are necessary to create a clear and mandatory foundation for public involvement that enables more meaningful participation and allows decision-making aimed at sustainability to occur. To achieve this, legislative reforms are needed that would see the public engaged early in the decision process through techniques that prove effective at achieving consensus.”²⁶⁴ A third mechanism to promote voice for all partners is employment of a neutral facilitator to ensure that such procedural safeguards are in place.

²⁶³ Doelle & Sinclair, 2006.

²⁶⁴ Doelle & Sinclair, 2006: 203.

²⁶⁵ Parris, 2003: 16.

²⁶⁶ Parris, 2003: 20.

Community Recommendation #3: Advocate explicit and realistic goals for improving the well-being of community to present to other sectors. Tie these to the agendas of NGO’s and transnational organizations. Support someone from the community to develop competencies to serve in a bridging role to ensure community voice at collaborative tables.

People often know best what is good for them. This may include a balance between social and economic advancement. Cultivating spokespersons to advocate for community-formulated needs is crucial to getting these needs addressed at partnership negotiating tables. In some cases, politicians may act as advocates. In others, grassroots visionaries may creatively articulate community needs. In either case, the most effective way to ensure that community needs are addressed occurs when key players serve as advocates between communities and other partners including central governments. Formulating widely appealing yet attainable stretch goals is also important. For example, “the UN Millennium Summit and the World Summit for Social Development each articulated a set of goals and targets for reducing poverty — defined as the proportion of people living on less than one dollar per day — to half of 2000 levels by 2015.”²⁶⁵ Finally, communities need to be willing to advocate for significant change. “Although meeting consensus goals and targets is a necessary condition to a sustainability transition, it is most likely not sufficient. There are key aspects of the nature-society system for which there has yet to evolve a strong political or scientific consensus or for which the current consensus may be unsound.”²⁶⁶

Efforts by business and other stakeholders to partner to advance corporate and societal sustainability objectives have dramatically accelerated in the last several years. These partnerships take a variety of forms and vary considerably in scope and reach. Some are limited to two partners; others are multiparty and national in scope, such as the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement; and still others, such as the Roundtable on Palm Oil, span the globe. This report has identified and explored

the key factors that shape the nature and outcomes of cross-sector partnerships for sustainability. The report has also highlighted the range of partner and process issues that partnerships face in finding sustainability solutions that benefit all stakeholders. Despite the burgeoning literature on this topic, many unanswered questions remain, as identified in Appendix E. While partnerships cannot solve all social ills, if managed well, they do offer promising opportunities for forging sustainable solutions for the planet.

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appendices

The appendices detail:

- The process for conducting this review (A)
- Definitions of sustainability (B)
- Different theoretical approaches to understanding partnerships (C)
- Summary information for individual articles reviewed (D)
- Future research questions (E)
- Actual partnerships involving diverse sectors and issues (F)

Appendix A: Detailed Methodology

This appendix contains the detailed methodology for this systematic review. The complete summary of supporting references for the study can be found in Appendix D.

Overview and Research Questions. The purpose of this systematic review is to synthesize knowledge on partnerships with regard to improving corporate sustainability efforts. Hence, this review integrates two somewhat distinct bodies of work (i.e. research/practice on business-NGO partnerships and research/practice on multi-sector partnerships for sustainability) for work published between 2000 and 2012. The research questions for this systemic review were developed through discussion among the researchers, members of the NBS (Network for Business Sustainability) Guidance Committee, an academic advisor with substantial relevant experience and the managing director of the NBS. The core question addressed in this systemic review is: What are the best practices for firms to collaborate with other organizations to advance sustainable business? In addition to this overarching question, we address the following sub-questions:

1. What different forms do collaborative partnerships take and how do these forms affect the possible outcomes achieved?
2. What practices help to reconcile stakeholders' conflicting views about sustainability and promote consensus within partnerships?
3. How should partnership success be evaluated?
4. What is the role of the broader societal context

(e.g. institutional environment) in shaping the formation, operation and success of these partnerships for sustainability?

On the basis of these questions, the researchers developed a search protocol to capture all of the books, journal articles and practitioner reports relevant to the review.

Selection Criteria. Focusing on books and articles published from 2000 to 2012, the researchers developed a list of search terms and keywords that were vetted by the members of the NBS Guidance Committee, an academic advisor with substantial relevant experience, the managing director of the NBS, and additional experts in the fields of both sustainability and collaboration. The resulting list of search terms used is as follows:

- Business and NGO partnerships
- Business and NGO collaboration
- Business and civil society
- Business and CSO*
- Base of the Pyramid partnerships
- Business and social movements
- Collab*
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Cross-sector partnerships
- CSR engagement
- CSR partnerships
- Green collaboration
- Green partnerships
- Multi-party collaboration
- Multi-party partnerships
- Multi-sector collaboration
- Multi-sector partnerships
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships

- Roundtables for sustainability
- Sustainability partnerships
- Sustainability collaboration

Because each of these search terms brings up between 500 and 11,000 hits, many of which contain useless information for our purposes, we narrowed our search for journal articles to include the name of the journal in the search term. To do so, we identified a set of pertinent management journals to use for the literature on business sustainability partnerships. For research on

multiparty collaboration more broadly, we identified a set of public administration and policy journals that routinely publish work in this area. We selected these journals based on a 1990 ranking of public administration journals by prestige.²⁶⁷ We eliminated six journals from the top 15 list: three (marked in Table 6 by *) which were already in our management list and three that focused on human resource management. This left 9 journals on that list. We added six other journals that routinely carry articles about multi-sector partnerships: four journals in the natural resources/natural environment arena, one in the non-profit

Table 6

ACADEMIC JOURNALS USED IN ARTICLE SEARCH

MANAGEMENT JOURNALS	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, POLICY AND NATURAL RESOURCE/VOLUNTARY SECTOR JOURNALS
Academy of Management Executive	Academy of Management Journal*
Academy of Management Journal	Administration and Society
Academy of Management Review	Administrative Science Quarterly*
Administrative Science Quarterly	American Journal of Political Science
Business and Society	American Political Science Review
Business and Society Review	Annals of the American Academy
Business Strategy and the Environment	Environmental Impact Assessment Review
Corporate Governance: An International Review	Environmental Law
Harvard Business Review	Harvard Business Review*
Human Relations	Journal of American Planning Association
Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	Journal of Dispute Resolution
Journal of Business Ethics	Journal of Politics
Journal of International Business Studies	Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management
Journal of Management Studies	Natural Resources Journal
Journal of Organizational Behavior	Not for Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly
Long Range Planning	Public Administration Review
Management Science	Public Interest
Organization Science	Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal
Organization Studies	Social Sciences Quarterly
Strategic Management Journal	

²⁶⁷ Colson, 1990.

sector arena and one in the dispute resolution arena. Consequently, we searched the journals listed in Table 6.

We entered the keywords presented above as search terms together with each journal name in the Pennsylvania State University's Library database, which covers nearly all major academic databases, including, but not limited to ABI/INFORM, EBSCO, JSTOR, LexisNexis, PROQUEST, Sage and SpringerLink. We also conducted searches through Google Scholar to identify any articles that may have been missed. Few additional articles were found via Google Scholar, increasing our confidence in the ability of our search terms to identify the appropriate journal articles.

In addition to journal articles, we also searched for relevant books and practitioner reports many of which we were already familiar with. These additional publications were identified by recommendation from academics and practitioners in the area, including those serving on the NBS Guidance Committee. In addition, we searched leading sustainability consultancies and think tanks (such as Accenture, Bain, BCG, and McKinsey). We also added to our database some additional articles, books and reports that were cited in other works included in our list.

Our search resulted in a large number of articles, books and practitioner reports. See Table 1 in the body of the report for a breakdown.

All articles were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and classified according to the following criteria:

- Does the source address the topics under study directly, tangentially or not at all?
- Does the source offer theoretical insights?
- Does the source offer information about best practices?
- Does the source address business partnerships for sustainability or other partnerships in which business is not a player?
- If the source is a case study, does it offer theoretical insights and/or recommendations for practice?
- What type of collaboration is reported?
 - Number of parties (e.g. dyadic, multiparty)
 - Duration/scope
 - Focus of the collaboration (e.g. sustainability, environmental protection, social service, education, development, supply chain, etc.)
 - Policy implications?
- Does the source report offer process-related considerations (e.g. antecedents, stages, barriers, outcomes)?

Preliminary Screening. To begin, we surveyed abstracts, prefaces and executive summaries of the initially identified journal articles, books and practitioner reports to discern their relevance for the systematic review. Our criteria for inclusion in the next phase of the study were that articles directly addressed the research questions. Though none of the sources were discarded, only those that were judged to be relevant for full review were included in the subsequent analysis. Our final dataset for analysis includes: The complete reference list for the final document set is provided in Appendix D.

Data Analysis. After identifying our final set of articles, we imported all of the documents into a qualitative data analysis software program called NVivo. We began to extract

Table 7

A PRIORI CODES USED FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SOURCES

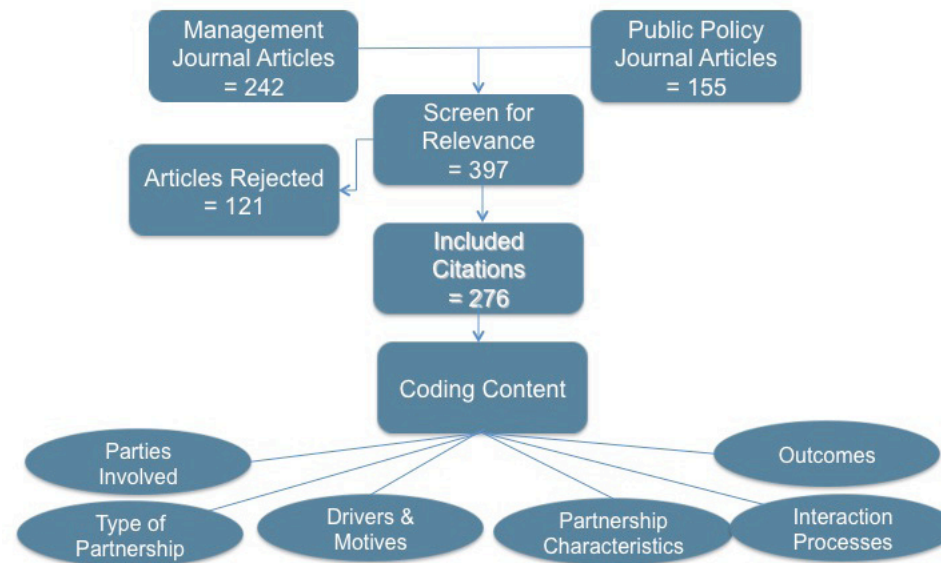
<p>A. PARTIES INVOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiparty collaboration 2. Business–NGO collaboration 3. Non-business collaboration 4. Stakeholder dialogues/engagement 5. Community/Indigenous people involvement 6. Citizen participation in government 7. Role of government with regard to CSR <p>B. TYPE/PURPOSE OF PARTNERSHIPS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Collaborating for community development 9. Eco-labelling 10. Self-regulation/standard setting 11. Collaborative governance 12. BOP strategies 13. Policy development 14. Marketing strategies 15. Environmental impact assessment 16. NGO strategies 17. Supply chain sustainability 18. Science-based collaborations 19. Types/forms/levels of collaboration <p>C. MOTIVATION, DRIVERS AND CONTEXT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Motivations for partnerships 21. Drivers of collaboration 22. Contextual factors <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Globalization b. Regulation 	<p>D. INTERACTION PROCESSES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Process of collaboration <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Representation b. Decision support c. Facilitation/mediation d. Mandated vs. not mandated 24. Learning and knowledge transfer 25. Trust 26. Corporate governance of CSR 27. Internationalizing CSR/cultural issues <p>E. OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 28. Outcomes of collaboration (pros & cons) 29. Criteria for success and failure 30. Legitimacy issues 31. Ethical issues raised 32. Differing perceptions of collaboration 33. Practical implications <p>F. THEORIES OF COLLABORATION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 34. Critical theory perspective 35. Network theory perspective 36. Institutional theory perspective
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information from our final set of sources by “open coding” each source. Open coding refers to “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data,”²⁶⁸ by attaching a label to sections of text. In this way, theory is built from concepts and themes that emerge from raw data via constant comparison.²⁶⁹ We began with a set of a priori codes, as shown in Table 7, but modified these codes and added additional codes as we pored through the data. In general, our codes focused on the parties involved, the types and purposes of partnerships, motivations, drivers and context, interaction processes, outcomes and accountability, as well as the various theories used to explain collaboration.

Results. Once we had completed coding and had reviewed our memos created during this process, we began to take a closer look at the coded sections and captured areas of synergy among the articles. We structured the final report to capture our synergistic findings related to the coding structure. Taking into account the audience for the report, we searched for consistent or overlapping frameworks in the data and synthesized these into models that we believed best captured the variety of approaches represented. Additionally, periodic conversations with the NBS Guidance Committee allowed us to test our focus against manager needs. The overall process, including numbers of articles identified and retained, is shown in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12

CODING PROCESS



²⁶⁸ Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 61.

²⁶⁹ Strauss & Corbin, 2008.

Limitations. As with any study, this systematic review has its limitations. As much as we are confident that our search terms captured the work relevant to this review, it is possible that some sources were not included in our review. To overcome this limitation, we did include key ideas from many of the papers and books that were referenced in our original set of articles and these are cited in the report as appropriate.

Appendix B: Definitions of Sustainability

The earliest definition, offered in the Brundtland Report,²⁷⁰ defines sustainability, usually environmental, as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” More recent definitions tend to be more specific. For example, Brown defines “ecological sustainable development” as “development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.”²⁷¹

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) describes a sustainable or “green” economy as “one in which growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.”²⁷² Senge, Lichtenstein, Kaeufer,

²⁷⁰ United Nations, 1987.

²⁷¹ Brown, 2002: 25.

²⁷² Hecht et al., 2012: 66.

²⁷³ Senge, Lichtenstein, Kaeufer, Bradbury, & Carroll, 2007.

²⁷⁴ Carroll, 1979: 500.

Bradbury and Carroll²⁷³ suggest that industrial systems can be brought into harmony with nature by balancing use and regeneration of resources and by striving to preserve the lives of humans, other species and future generations.

Yet another definition is offered by The Natural Step, an international network of scientists concerned about humans’ adverse impact on the earth. They concluded that “human society is damaging nature and altering life-supporting natural structures and functions in three fundamental ways.

Consequently, they defined four basic conditions that must be met to maintain “the essential natural resources, structures and functions that sustain human society” and “the capacity of human beings to meet their basic needs” (see <http://www.naturalstep.org/the-system-conditions>).

Other researchers have explicitly linked sustainability and CSR, which are often used interchangeably though they have different historical trajectories. Whereas CSR has traditionally been defined using Carroll’s statement that “the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time,”²⁷⁴ sustainability has traditionally been defined using the Brundtland definition, noted above, as focusing on the needs of the present and future generations. Even broader definitions of sustainability also address improvements to the livelihoods and

well-being of the world's poor, advocating what have been called Base-of-the-Pyramid approaches.²⁷⁵ These definitions often offer challenges²⁷⁶ to more corporate-oriented approaches that stress value creation for the firm.²⁷⁷ However, recent research suggests that despite their history, the terms' meanings have merged as both now represent the effort to "balance economic responsibilities with social and environmental ones."²⁷⁸ We use the terms interchangeably as both refer to the way in which businesses take account of and manage economic, social and environmental issues and are responsive to stakeholders.²⁷⁹

Appendix C. Theoretical Frameworks for Examining Partnerships for Sustainability

We were struck by the overall variety of theories used to describe partnerships for sustainability, but also the limited use of theory in making the arguments that appeared in most of the articles. Additionally, despite the inductive approaches used in many of the articles, these case studies offered, overall, a limited contribution to theory development. A handful of more theory-oriented articles, although notable, did not seem to influence much of the other work in the area.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ Prahalad, 2004; Hart, 2005.

²⁷⁶ Lertzman & Vredenberg, 2005; Banerjee et al., 2009; Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007.

²⁷⁷ c.f., Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a.

²⁷⁸ Montiel, 2008: 246, emphasis added.

²⁷⁹ Montiel, 2008.

²⁸⁰ c.f. London & Hart, 2004; Hardy et al., 2005; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Lin, 2012a.

²⁸¹ Scott, 1995.

²⁸² Argenti, 2004: 93.

²⁸³ DiMaggio & Powell, 1983.

²⁸⁴ Vurro, Dacin & Perrini, 2010.

In particular, there are ten main theoretical frameworks that are used to describe and examine partnerships for sustainability. Of these, three are most commonly used: institutional theory, resource dependence theory and stakeholder theory. Additional theoretical perspectives include the resource-based view, agency theory and transaction cost economics, environmental justice, network theory, critical theory, actor network theory, and deliberative democracy and dialogue theories. A brief description of each of these theoretical frameworks is provided below.

Institutional Theory. From the perspective of institutional theory, organizations engage in actions because of coercive, mimetic and normative pressures exerted on the organization.²⁸¹ In particular, because "public expectations of corporations evolve with changes in the social environment,"²⁸² organizations must conform to these expectations to be perceived as legitimate, and thus to survive.²⁸³ To meet public expectations, organizations can form partnerships that enhance their legitimacy and image as socially and environmentally responsible. But the link between institutional dynamics and organizational processes of cross-sector interaction has not yet been explored in detail.²⁸⁴

Resource Dependence. From the perspective of resource dependence theory, organizations are characterized in terms of their reliance on other

organizations for various assets necessary for organizational survival.²⁸⁵ In particular, “When a particular resource is critical to an organization’s survival or success, the organization is likely to attempt to either control it or co-operate with organizations that can provide it or regulate its provision.”²⁸⁶ Similarly, because the survival of many organization’s depends on legislation, many organizations partner with other organizations, NGOs or governments to influence (or even co-opt) legislation so that it has a less uncertain and detrimental effect on the organization. Thus, partnerships can help organizations to reduce environmental uncertainty and secure access to important resources.

Stakeholder Theory. From the perspective of stakeholder theory, organizations must be aware that their decisions and behaviour may affect stakeholders, defined as any actor that may benefit from or be harmed by firm actions, particularly in regards to social and environmental behaviour.²⁸⁷ Stakeholder theory was offered as an alternative to the predominant view of the 1980s, “that social well-being is maximized when shareholder wealth is maximized.”²⁸⁸ In particular, stakeholder theory explains why organizations engage in sustainability actions and shows that firms that “do good” through charitable donations, support of social causes or other actions generally have better stakeholder relations as a result.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Peffer & Salancik, 1978.

²⁸⁶ Lambell et al., 2008: 80.

²⁸⁷ Freeman, 1984.

²⁸⁸ Laplume, Sonpar & Litz, 2008.

²⁸⁹ e.g. Hillman & Keim, 2001.

²⁹⁰ Barney, 1991.

²⁹¹ Lin, 2012a and Lin, 2012b.

²⁹² Jensen & Meckling, 1976.

²⁹³ Guay, Doh & Sinclair, 2004: 125.

Resource-based View. From the perspective of the resource-based view (RBV), organizations can achieve a competitive advantage by building a unique set of assets.²⁹⁰ To form a competitive advantage, these assets must be valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable, and, thus, unique. Studies emanating from the RBV perspective look at partnerships for sustainability as way for organizations to access and further develop heterogeneous and complementary assets for competitive advantage.²⁹¹ Practically speaking, when a firm partners with a socially- or environmentally-oriented NGO, the firm often gains both knowledge of the NGO’s expertise regarding the issues at hand and access to the NGO’s network of supporters. Access to these resources can give organizations an advantage in their markets or among their constituencies. Further, learning theories are derived from the RBV, as organizations often partner with one another for direct learning and knowledge benefits.

Agency Theory and Transaction Cost Economics. From the perspective of agency theory, there is a conflict as to whether the “agent,” typically a hired manager, acts in his or her own self-interest or in the best interests of the “principal,” typically the body of shareholders that hired the manager.²⁹² Because of the rise of socially responsible investing, NGOs may be “influential in shaping the ethical and social responsibility orientations of businesses” as they become key shareholders.²⁹³ Thus, NGOs and other organizations can help reduce agents’ opportunistic behaviour by urging firms’

“voluntary adoption of standards of behavior that limit or eliminate it.”²⁹⁴ Similar to agency theory, transaction cost economics examine the costs incurred in making exchanges²⁹⁵ and decisions regarding whether to complete projects in-house or to outsource them. With regard to partnerships for sustainability, transaction cost economics helps to explain why firms and NGOs might partner to deliver social goods.²⁹⁶

Environmental Justice. Theories regarding ethics and partnerships for sustainability can take various forms, but the common thread is that corporate social responsibility and sustainability are associated with improving social and environmental conditions for all, including quality of life for people who are less advantaged.²⁹⁷ In particular, the most common ethical theory referenced is justice-based. Theories of environmental justice refer to perspectives that capture the fairness of pollution distribution and access to clean, safe resources, especially for members of a minority social class or race, because places where these people “‘live, work, play, go to school, and worship’ tend to bear a disproportionate burden of environmental threats.”²⁹⁸ From this perspective, partnerships for sustainability are geared toward working with various organizations and communities to improve environmental fairness.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ Jones, 1995: 412.

²⁹⁵ Williamson, 1981.

²⁹⁶ King, 2007.

²⁹⁷ Sharma & Tyagi, 2010.

²⁹⁸ Shilling, London & Lievanos, 2009: 697.

²⁹⁹ Cornelius & Wallace, 2010.

³⁰⁰ Kilduff & Tsai, 2003.

³⁰¹ Crane, 1998.

³⁰² Prasad & Mills, 2011.

³⁰³ Laasonen, Fougere & Kourula, 2012: 532.

Network Theory. From the perspective of network theory, the structure of relationships between entities is considered.³⁰⁰ Often, network theory is invoked in terms of supply chain relationships for sustainability, where firms must consider their connections both upstream and downstream to achieve sustainability ideals such as cradle-to-grave stewardship and lifecycle analysis.³⁰¹ Partnering with organizations in a firm’s supply chain can have a profound impact on the firm’s sustainability trajectory.

Critical Theories. From the perspective of critical theories, traditional approaches are challenged. The aim of critical theory is to problematize, or question the very nature of, dominant ways of thinking.³⁰² For example, critical theories in the partnership area focus on whether partnerships can actually result in win-win solutions and, the related question of whether such partnerships coopt social and environmental interests. In effect, critical theories view “the dominant tendency to suppress conflict in articulations of partnership and governance initiatives as problematic.”³⁰³ Hence, critical theories question whether partnerships simply reinforce the neo-liberal order without generating substantial changes in resource distribution or the well-being of marginalized groups.

Actor Network Theory. Actor network theory (ANT), or the sociology of translation, examines sociotechnical

processes associated with scientific and technological activities. It stresses the important role of material objects as actors along with human beings.³⁰⁴ ANT views science as ordinary human activity in which social, technical, conceptual and textual activities are interrelated. It examines the controversies that occur as science is produced³⁰⁵ and trials of strength in which networks of scientists engage and influence each other to determine which knowledge will pass muster. In essence, it deals with power struggles enacted through networks to define what knowledge will prevail.

Deliberative Democracy and Dialogue Theories.

Deliberative democracy argues that the legitimacy of democratic decision making hinges on the need for authentic deliberation among parties who have unequal political power which may accrue from holding economic wealth or interest group backing.³⁰⁶ Gutmann and Thompson³⁰⁷ define deliberative democracy as “a form of government in which free and equal citizens and their representatives justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of

reaching decisions that are binding on all at present but open to challenge in the future.”

In deliberative democracy, political decisions do not result from aggregating preferences through voting, but rather through discussion and the search for consensus. It can be practised by legislatures and courts or by groups of lay citizens with whom governmental decision making is shared. Such deliberation has advantages over other forms of decision making; it can reduce partisanship, produce rational decisions based on scientific input and increase commitment to decisions by those who make them.³⁰⁸

Dialogue theories stress authentic forms of communication and assume that participants’ viewpoints can be changed when a connection is established with another person. This change occurs through ethically motivated interaction, in which participants search for a way to incorporate their respective points of view without compromising them.

³⁰⁴ Callon, 1986; Law, 1992; Latour, 2005.

³⁰⁵ Latour, 2005.

³⁰⁶ Cohen, 1997.

³⁰⁷ Guttman & Thompson, 2004: 3.

³⁰⁸ Fishkin, 2011.

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Appendix D: Summary of Articles Generated by the Search

We provide summary information for each article reviewed: e.g. the type of study and aspects of the content.

This table is available as a spreadsheet online on the NBS website: <http://nbs.net/wp-content/uploads/Appendix-D-Articles-Analyzed.xlsx>.

Appendix E: Future Research Questions

QUESTION	SOURCE
What are the possible institutional designs that can provide accountability, stability and governability without killing the flexibility necessary for continuous learning and adaptation?	Kallis et al., 2009
How does the performance of nonprofits differ based on their propensity to form partnerships?	Suarez, 2011
To the extent that cross-sector alliances tend to be shorter, fixed duration arrangements, how does this affect learning and multinational ability to promote values globally?	Arya & Salk, 2006
How can partners maximize their partnership fit potential? Do partners' motives link with their partnership strategies? What is the role of partnership champions before and during the partnership?	Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a
Given the differing organizational structures of social enterprises and corporations, can the partners resolve tensions without undermining either their position in the partnership or the distinctive characteristics of their respective organizational forms?	Di Domenico, Tracey & Haugh, 2009
What are the specific indicators of business and societal collaborative outcomes?	Kourula & Laasonen, 2010
How are relationships between multiple NGOs and corporations best structured in light of the tendency for cooptation?	Weber, 2009
In what ways do macro and micro views of multi-sector collaboration inform the link between institutional dynamics and organizational processes?	Vurro, Dacin & Perrini, 2010
How do different forms of civic engagement, including deliberative democracy and participatory budgeting, affect the collaboration process and its outcomes? Does broader civic engagement change the nature of the decision content or process?	Bingham & O'Leary, 2006
How do partnerships change the institutional fields in which they are embedded?	Selsky & Parker, 2005
To what extent are powerful stakeholders willing to give up power to achieve consensus outcomes?	Baldwin & Ross, 2012
How does one identify, target and prioritize collaborators within and across sectors? Also, to what extent might framing play a role in moderating the extent to which cross-sector partners become interested and willing to collaborate for social change? Are convening strategies in this space different (more or less difficult, for example) if collaborating within the same sector or across sectors? Further, how could collective social entrepreneurial ventures pro-actively build multivocality so as to overcome partnership barriers, mitigate resource voids, and build legitimacy for their work?	Montgomery, Dacin & Dacin, 2012
What is the best way to address the potentially egregious shortcomings of governance mechanisms, especially those concerning the distribution of costs and benefits of environmental change?	Agarwal & Lemos, 2007

Appendix F: Table of Cases

We detail almost 150 past and current partnerships across the globe. These are all the partnership cases that were described in sufficient detail in the literature reviewed to be able to identify the issues addressed and some key outcomes or learning.

This table is available as a spreadsheet online on the NBS website: <http://nbs.net/wp-content/uploads/Appendix-F-Table-of-cases-131117.xlsx>.

about NBS

A Canadian non-profit established in 2005, the Network for Business Sustainability produces authoritative resources on important sustainability issues – with the goal of changing management practice. We unite thousands of researchers and professionals worldwide who believe passionately in research-based practice and practice-based research.

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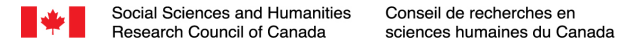
NBS Leadership Council

NBS's Leadership Council is a group of Canadian sustainability leaders from diverse sectors. At an annual meeting, these leaders identify their top priorities in business sustainability – the issues on which their organizations need authoritative answers and reliable insights.



NBS Leadership Council members are not responsible for the content of this report.

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