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1 Article

# 2 An Inclusive Approach to Partnerships for the SDGs: 3 Using a Relationship Lens to Explore the Potential for 4 Transformational Collaboration

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12 **Abstract:** Partnerships are positioned as critical for the achievement of the Sustainable Development  
13 Goals and the United Nations transformational agenda for 2030. The widespread use of terms such  
14 as ‘collaboration’, ‘partnership’ and ‘cooperation’ has, however, led to debates about the  
15 expectations of such relationships and calls have been made for more rigorous clarification and  
16 classification of these related concepts. In this article we argue that the vast spectrum of personal  
17 and organizational interactions within, between and across different sectors, domains, disciplines  
18 and contexts makes the quest to delineate and categorize these diverse forms of collaboration a  
19 seemingly impossible task. We further suggest that such efforts advance a narrow view of  
20 partnership as little more than a means to an end, thus limiting understanding of the integrative  
21 and intrinsic value of working in this way. We believe that a more inclusive understanding of  
22 partnerships may be achieved by exploring them through a relationship lens that acknowledges the  
23 importance of inter-personal connections in partnerships more deeply. In doing so, the capacity of  
24 partnerships to generate the systemic change that is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable  
25 Development may be enhanced and ultimately realized.

26 **Keywords:** Partnerships; sustainable development; SDGs; relationships; transformation;  
27 collaboration; inter-personal connections  
28

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## 29 1. Introduction

30 In December 2019, the four shortlisted contenders for the annual Tate Turner Prize [1] awarded  
31 to a British visual artist asked the judges if the prize could be presented to all of them. Oscar Murillo,  
32 Tai Shani, Helen Cammock and Lawrence Abu Hamdan described this as a request that was  
33 consistent with their values of ‘commonality, multiplicity and solidarity’ [2,3]. In addition to making  
34 a stand for collaboration and inclusion in the face of a hostile post-Brexit political environment, Tai  
35 Shani further observed that the request for a collective win was a way of questioning established  
36 power structures and ‘renegotiating hierarchies’ [4].

37 Both the joint petition by the Turner Prize nominees and ultimate co-winners, and the language  
38 used by them to frame their request, resonate with what Seitanidi and Ryan (2007) describe as  
39 “...evidence of a paradigm shift away from arm’s length, atomistic and transactional notions of  
40 exchange between organizational actors, towards an approach which foregrounds intense  
41 interaction, relationships and networks” [5] (p. 256). Relationships, which are defined here as “the  
42 way in which two or more people are connected, or the state of being connected” [6], are at the center  
43 of this new configuration. A growing interest in collaborative relationships that have empathy and

44 reciprocity at their core [7-10] further highlights the important role played by individuals and  
45 “underlying emotional and cognitive processes” in these arrangements [11] (p.105).

46 Relevant links can also be made to the idea of relational intelligence: “a capacity to engage in  
47 relationships: an ability to connect and interact effectively and respectfully with people and  
48 stakeholders from various backgrounds, diverse cultures and with different interests, inside and  
49 outside the organization, at home as well as across distances, businesses, sectors, countries and  
50 cultures” [12] (p.2). More recently, the idea of relational intelligence has been popularized by  
51 psychotherapist Esther Perel as a way of understanding, valuing and enhancing different kinds of  
52 relationships [13-16]. Perel’s success in linking the personal and the organizational suggests that how  
53 we relate to each other at home, work and the wider community is a crucial ingredient for more  
54 cooperative and sustainable lives, careers and societies.

55 On a broader level, these tendencies suggest that collaboration among both individuals and  
56 organizations within and between workplaces, families, communities, countries and regions is  
57 increasingly needed [13,17]; not just to address the complex or ‘wicked’ problems at the heart of the  
58 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [18-19] but also to mitigate the political  
59 discord and divisiveness that limits their transformational aspiration to ‘leave no one behind’ [20-21].

60 In this article we argue that those promoting partnerships for the SDGs have much to learn from  
61 new and emerging ways of understanding and working in collaboration, such as those manifested  
62 by the joint winners of the 2019 Turner Prize. It is our contention that by giving greater consideration  
63 to personal connections in organizational relationships, and attention to how these linkages mutually  
64 reinforce one another, a more inclusive basis for collaborating for the achievement of the SDGs (and  
65 beyond) may be realized.

66 To explore this further we begin with an analysis of the challenges of defining partnership and  
67 categorizing the diverse and evolving forms in which it is manifested. Arguing that due to their wide  
68 range and scope, the creation of comprehensive typologies for partnerships is extremely difficult, we  
69 suggest that a more inclusive understanding of partnership may be developed by using a relational  
70 lens to study them. To do this, we present an overview of a variety of different personal and  
71 organizational relationships that make use of the terminology of partnership, collaboration and  
72 related words to describe and present these interactions. In order to further refine this approach, we  
73 suggest that interpersonal connections and the values they espouse are central to partnership and  
74 other collaborative relationships that seek to promote the transformation and inclusiveness stipulated  
75 in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We build upon this idea by  
76 proposing a model for exploring partnership relationships that promotes a move away from the  
77 mainly instrumental and extrinsic to embrace interactions that are more integrative and intrinsic at  
78 both individual and organizational levels. We conclude with a summary of the rationale for  
79 developing a more inclusive appreciation of partnerships and how this might be leveraged to  
80 promote the systemic changes required for more sustainable forms of development.

## 81 **2. Partnerships for the SDGs**

82 The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out a blueprint for a more  
83 peaceful and prosperous planet with countries agreeing to meet the interconnected targets of the 17  
84 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [20]. The SDGs focus on measures to end poverty and  
85 eliminate hunger, improve access to basic services such as energy, water and sanitation, health and  
86 education and reduce inequality, while also tackling climate change and working to conserve our  
87 natural environment. The final goal, SDG 17, is a transversal one which aims to strengthen the means  
88 of implementing the SDGs through partnerships. SDG 17 promotes a Global Partnership for  
89 Sustainable Development led by governments to strengthen international cooperation and  
90 development assistance. This Global Partnership is intended to work alongside multi-stakeholder  
91 partnerships at global, regional, national or subnational levels that “mobilize and share knowledge,  
92 expertise, technology and financial resources to support the implementation of the SDGs” [20] (p27).

93 Although described as pivotal to the transformational efforts required for the realization of all  
94 the SDGs, the main focus of SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) is on securing support for increased

95 aid from ‘developed’ to ‘developing’ countries with long-term debt assistance, technology transfer  
 96 and support for a universal, fair and open trading system under the purview of the World Trade  
 97 Organization [22-27]. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are grouped with ‘systemic issues’ that need to  
 98 be ‘enhanced’ to support the achievement of the SDGs such as policy and institutional coherence, and  
 99 data, monitoring and accountability [20,26]. In general, Goal 17 fails to transmit the much wider  
 100 potential that partnerships have for generating the transformations at the heart of the Sustainable  
 101 Development Agenda which include the advancement and endorsement of positive rules, norms and  
 102 connections at policy level; shifts in individual and organizational behaviors; and the empowerment  
 103 of vulnerable and marginalized stakeholders [26, 28-31]. We suggest that the potential of partnerships  
 104 to augment these changes may be enhanced by promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation  
 105 of partnership that explores the interaction between personal and organizational relationships in  
 106 relation to the SDGs.

### 107 3. The Challenge of Defining and Categorizing Partnerships

108

#### Partnership: Origin of the term

109

The term ‘partner’ originates from the Latin word ‘partitio’ or partition which related to the act of dividing,  
 110 sharing or parting. Following the Norman conquest of England in 1066, both Anglo-Norman French and Middle  
 111 English used the word ‘parcener’ to describe a partner as a joint heir with shared inheritance rights to an  
 112 undivided estate. The word partner in English eventually came to be understood as someone associated with  
 113 another in a common activity or interest. ‘Ship’ meanwhile, when linked to a noun, denotes a property or state  
 114 of being, e.g. relation – relationship; owner - ownership, leader – leadership. Partnership thus demotes the state  
 115 of being associated with a partner.

116

Sources: <https://www.etymonline.com/>; <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/partner#English>

117

Although the term ‘partnership’ has a long history (see above), and the use of partnership  
 118 language in the field of international development dates back at least half a century [32], it has become  
 119 something of a buzzword in recent years. The advance of globalization and the increasingly  
 120 intertwined nature of complex problems faced by society have given rise to a more widely accepted  
 121 conceptualization of partnership as an association that brings together different sectors of society to  
 122 pool their diverse resources, capitalize on synergies, and share risks and benefits in order to  
 123 accomplish something that they could not do alone [33].

124

Since the first UN General Assembly resolution ‘Towards Global Partnerships’ in 2000 [34], the  
 125 idea of partnership in an international development context has evolved with the most recent of the  
 126 biennial UN resolutions [35] defining partnership as: “voluntary and collaborative relationships  
 127 between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together  
 128 to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and  
 129 responsibilities, resources and benefits” (A/RES/73/254, para. 4).

130

In parallel, in the field of sustainable development, partnerships were endorsed as a key  
 131 approach for achieving environmental and developmental change at the 1992 UN Earth Summit in  
 132 Rio de Janeiro. While initially centered mainly upon collaboration between public and private  
 133 organizations, sustainable development partnerships are now accepted as embracing “a broad  
 134 alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sector, all working together to secure  
 135 the future we want for present and future generations” [36].

136

This evolution is reflected in use of the terms ‘multi-actor’, ‘multi-party’ or ‘multi-stakeholder  
 137 partnerships’ that are situated at the heart of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda [20, 21]. In a  
 138 related vein, the most recent General Assembly resolution “stresses that partnerships will be critical  
 139 to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as an effective instrument for mobilizing  
 140 additional human and financial resources, expertise, technology and knowledge, while reiterating  
 141 that partnerships are a complement to, but are not intended as a substitute for, the commitment made  
 142 by Governments with a view to achieving the Goals” [35] (A/RES/73/254, para. 5).

143

The partnership landscape, however, extends far beyond the fields of international and  
 144 sustainable development. The broader partnership terrain encompasses a vast array of collaborative

145 relationships across numerous academic disciplines and professions that have many different forms,  
146 names, partners and goals, and operate at global, regional, national and local levels. In a literature  
147 review conducted by Creech and Paas [37], for example, the following diverse types of partnerships  
148 were identified:

149 Business Partnerships; Strategic Alliances; Public-private partnerships; Tri-sector or Cross sector  
150 partnerships; WSSD [38] Multi-stakeholder Partnerships; Mandated partnerships; Enacted  
151 Partnerships; Community partnerships; Negotiated partnerships; Local partnerships; Locally led  
152 partnerships; Participatory international partnerships; Non-participatory international partnerships;  
153 Nascent partnerships; R&D (research and development) partnerships; Production partnerships;  
154 Transactional partnerships; Integrative partnerships.

155 It is not surprising then that both the looseness of the term and the variety of different  
156 relationships that are being promoted under the banner of ‘partnership’ have raised questions about  
157 how these relationships might best be understood and categorized [33,39-42].

158 While there appears to be general consensus on the impossibility of arriving at a concrete  
159 universal definition of partnership, useful efforts have been made to distinguish partnerships from  
160 looser collaborative forms such as networks and coalitions [30,43-46]. Another helpful distinction has  
161 been made between statutory or mandated partnerships required by legislation for a specific purpose  
162 and more voluntary partnerships among organizations working together for a common strategic  
163 purpose [48]. Although the terms are widely used interchangeably [50], Public Private Partnerships  
164 (PPPs) in which public sector agencies contract businesses to provide services or build infrastructure,  
165 have also been differentiated from more flexible, often non-contractual Multi-Stakeholder  
166 Partnerships (MSPs) [30]. In addition, it has been noted that cross-sector partnerships such as those  
167 involving companies and NGOs cover a wide spectrum from sponsorship and cause-related  
168 marketing activities through to much more strategic collaboration on sustainability policy  
169 development and implementation [44-45,47-48].

170 Further attention has been drawn to the fact that while ‘partnership’ is most often depicted as a  
171 structural form or construct, it can also be construed as ‘partnering’ – a process or way of working  
172 cooperatively [42]. The European Union’s (EU) ‘partnership principle’, for example, outlines a  
173 process of engagement and ‘multilevel governance’ between different social actors and levels of  
174 government that ensures the effective delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds [51].  
175 ‘Partnership’ has also been described as a form of ‘social’ or ‘collaborative’ governance in which  
176 different actors work together to address societal problems [52-54] and as a form of development  
177 cooperation between North and South [55].

178 Because of the enormous range of forms and shapes that partnerships take, the quest to develop  
179 a comprehensive typology of partnerships is a challenging one [37]. Some examples of the diverse  
180 typologies that have been put forward include the three types of collaboration identified in the  
181 pioneering work of Murphy and Bendell [44] on business-NGO partnerships:

- 182 • Process-oriented: developing strategies, policies, relationships
- 183 • Project-oriented: focusing on discrete activities linked to core business practices
- 184 • Product-oriented: delivering improvements to products, services, sales

185 Selsky and Parker [41], meanwhile, propose a typology for cross-sector partnerships that address  
186 social issues which outlines four categories of partnerships characterized by the actors and sectors  
187 involved:

- 188 • Non-profit organizations and businesses
- 189 • Governments and businesses
- 190 • Governments and non-profit organizations
- 191 • Actors from all three sectors

192 Moving away from a focus on participating organizations, Kelly and Roche [56] classify  
 193 partnerships involving the Australian Council for International Development according to focus  
 194 areas that include:

- 195 • Development partnerships working for more effective development at the local level
- 196 • Partnerships to support civil society development
- 197 • Partnerships which leverage a more effective response to complex change situations
- 198 • Partnerships which add quality to the work of all partners
- 199 • Partnerships and alliances for social change

200 In contrast, Tennyson [57] presents a partnership typology based on “the choice of partnership  
 201 structure that is put in place to best support the achievement of particular goals and approaches.”  
 202 This categorization includes partnerships that range from policy and consultative arrangements and  
 203 multi-stakeholder relationships at different geographical levels, to partnerships that are temporary  
 204 and dispersed, and those that focus on learning. A further typology is offered by Austin and Seitanidi  
 205 [29] who propose a continuum that distinguishes between philanthropic, transactional, integrative  
 206 and transformational partnerships on the basis of their capacity to create collaborative value.

207 While all of these efforts provide interesting avenues for exploring partnerships, in addition to  
 208 their various forms and goals in different contexts, the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of  
 209 collaborative arrangements makes it impossible to contain them within static categories.  
 210 Furthermore, these classification exercises focus primarily on organizational and structural  
 211 relationships and most pay limited attention to the individual, relational and process dimensions that  
 212 these initiatives involve. The premise of this paper is that personal relationships and dynamics are  
 213 central to the organizational connections that form the basis of partnerships, and that  
 214 acknowledgement of this aspect can promote a more inclusive approach to partnerships for the SDGs  
 215 that, through shifts in individual and organizational behaviors, will enhance their possibilities for  
 216 achieving systemic change [19, 26].

#### 217 4. Using a Relationship Lens to Explore the Partnership Landscape

218 According to most dictionary definitions, a relationship refers to the way that two or more things  
 219 or entities are connected, associated or involved. Often used to describe a connection between two  
 220 people or groups, a relationship also involves how people feel and behave towards each other and  
 221 may embrace closeness and intimacy through connections such as blood, marriage or civil union.  
 222 Relationships can thus be highly personal and have deep-seated emotional bonds. However, because  
 223 the focus of most of the literature on partnerships is on organizational relationships, the more  
 224 personal dimension often goes unacknowledged. We believe that these inter-personal connections  
 225 are central to partnership arrangements and should be considered in any attempt to classify them.

226 To explore this premise further, we have sought to map an initial selection of collaborative  
 227 connections in a schema that includes both inter-personal and organizational contexts or settings that  
 228 have adopted the language of partnership, partnering and related terms to describe the relationship  
 229 between two or more entities and/or individuals (see Table 1).

230 **Table 1.** Different types of partnership and collaborative relationships.

	Examples	References
Inter-personal relationships	Lovers, spouses, families, friends, neighbors, colleagues, mentors, etc.	Chopra et al. [58] Detsky and Baerlocher [59]; Greenfield and Reyes [60]; Perel [16, 58-59]
Intra-organizational relationships	Partners in a business, cross-functional teams, virtual teams, collaborative leadership, etc.	Crosby and Bryson [63]; Cullen et al. [64]; Ibarra and Hansen [65]; Wilson [66]

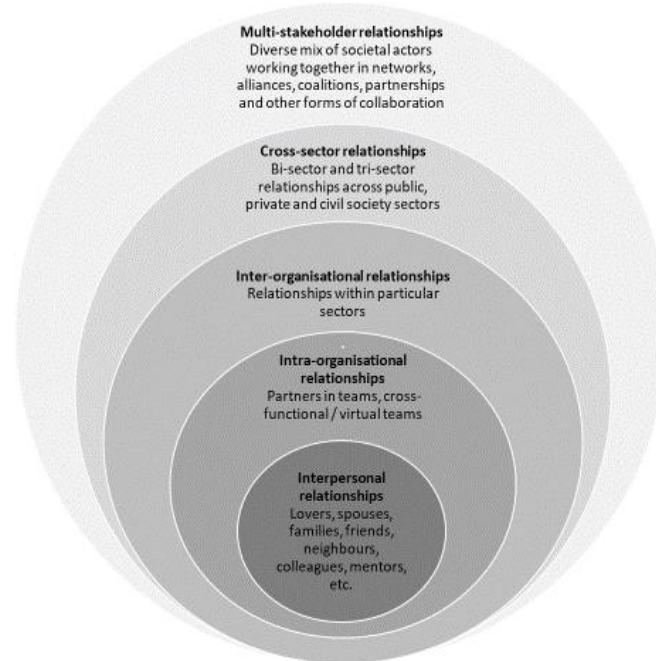
	<i>Business - Business</i> Strategic alliances, joint ventures, etc.	Hamel, Doz and Prahalad, C.K. [67]; Kanter [68]; Swientozielskyi [69]; Todeva and Knoke [70]
Inter-organizational relationships	<i>Government - Government</i> Country alliances/ agreements around particular themes, between public sector agencies	Lewis [71]; Pearson [32]
	<i>NGO - NGO</i> International-local partnerships, South-South, North-South; North- North	Abrahamsen [72]; Ashman [55]; Crawford [73]; Johnson and Wilson [74]
	<i>University - University</i>	Benneworth and Humphrey [75]; Taylor [76]
	<hr/>	
	<u><i>Bi sector</i></u>	
	<i>Business - Government</i>	Reed and Reed [77]; Selsky and Parker [41]
	<i>Business - United Nations</i>	Global Compact LEAD Task Force [78]; Murphy [79]; Nelson [80]; Stott [81]; Utting and Zammit [54; 82]
	<i>Business - Community</i>	Coombe [83]; Lee [84]; Loza [85]
	<i>Government - NGO</i>	Brinkerhoff [86]; Brinkerhoff [87]; Gazley [88]; Gazley and Brudney [89]
Cross-sector relationships	<i>NGOs - International donors</i>	Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff [53]
	<i>Business - NGO</i>	Austin [48]; Austin and Seitanidi [29]; Heap [90]; Murphy [43, 45]; Murphy and Bendell (44, 52); Seitanidi and Crane [91]
	<i>University - Community</i>	Baker et al. [92]; Benneworth and Humphrey [75]
	<u><i>Tri-sector</i></u>	
	<i>Business - Government - NGO</i>	Kolk et al. [93]; Nelson [94]; Seitanidi and Ryan [5]; Stadler [95]; Waddell [96]; Warner and Sullivan [97]
		Kapelus [98]; Sullivan [99]
	<i>Business - Community - NGO</i>	

	A diverse mix of actors and organizations from different parts of society working together in networks, alliances, coalitions, partnerships, including (among others):	Bäckstrand [100]; Beisham [101]; Glasbergen [102]; Pattberg and Widerberg [33]; Rein and Stott [31] United Nations [20-31, 34-36]); Van den Brande [51]
	<i>Co-creation/Co- production</i>	Stott [103]; Voorberg et al. [104]
	<i>Collective impact</i>	Hanleybrown et al. [105]; Harwood [106]; Kania and Kramer [107]
Multi-stakeholder (multi-actor, multi-party) relationships	<i>Innovation ecosystems</i>	Granstrand and Holgersson [108]; Mattila et al. [109]
	<i>Multipartite Social Partnerships</i>	Andersen and Mailand [110]
	<i>Public - Private – People Partnerships</i>	itdUPM [111]; Ng et al. [112]

231 The relationship overview in Table 1 provides us with the beginnings of a more inclusive  
 232 classification of partnership and similar collaborative arrangements. These connections have  
 233 different core objectives, ranging from fulfilment of a concrete task to working towards a longer-term  
 234 shared goal which may focus on capacity-building, behavioral or policy level change [30]. They are  
 235 also overlaid by diverse geographical, disciplinary, sectoral and thematic foci. Some examples of the  
 236 many thematic or disciplinary fields in which we have encountered the promotion of partnerships  
 237 include: international relations [113-114], international development [55,73,87], humanitarian  
 238 assistance [19, 115-116], disaster risk reduction [116-117], climate change [119-121]; sustainable  
 239 development [33,44,97,99,122], health and social care [123-124], policing [126], medicine and law  
 240 [127],and basic services such as energy, water, etc. [19, 128-130]. To these may be added the sector  
 241 focus of different initiatives (business, government, civil society, etc.) and geographic and  
 242 administrative levels of operation (local, regional, national and global /rural and urban).

243 Clearly then, because of the enormous number of variants outlined above, a 'one-size fits -all'  
 244 typology will be unable to capture the vast range of collaborative relationships in different contexts.  
 245 To begin to map these relationships in an inclusive manner we have elected to plot them as a series  
 246 of concentric rings that embrace both personal and organizational connections (see Figure 1).





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**Figure 1.** An inclusive map of different types of partnership and collaborative relationships.

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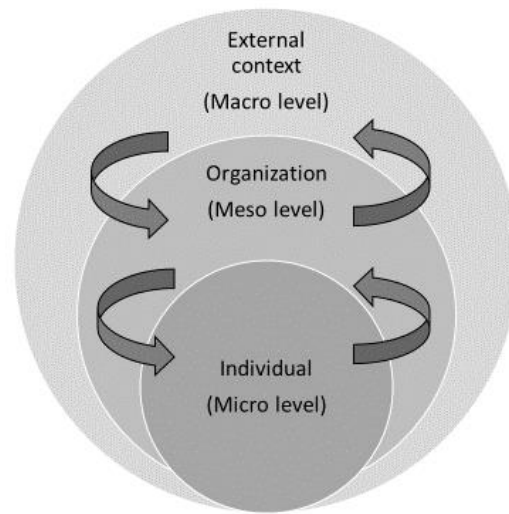
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Figure 1 positions close individual connections at the center and moves outwards to encompass different organizational connections. By presenting the relationships in this way, we seek to reinforce the point that interpersonal connections are at the heart of all these collaborative arrangements. As Such positioning reinforces Battisti's arguments that it is "individuals who work together and engage in partnerships rather than the organizations or the sectors" [11] (p.96) and that the emotional connections and dynamics that we are likely to encounter in interpersonal relationships are likely to resonate in broader organizational relationships. Awareness of these "underlying emotional and cognitive processes, and articulating and reflecting on them" is thus an important way of understanding the "unconscious mechanisms" that underpin partnership arrangements [11] (p.105).

Most academics and practitioners interested in personal and/or organizational relationships have tended to look at such relationships separately (e.g. work-life balance). As a result, little consideration is given to how a better understanding of what makes mutually beneficial relationships work at home might inform, influence and enhance relationships at work, between organizations and in the wider world. We believe that this divide is unhelpful and acknowledgement of the interconnections between these spheres is necessary to understand partnership and other collaborative relationships more fully. In this sense, it is our view that 'the personal is organizational' and 'the organizational is personal'. It is also important to highlight that personal and organizational relationships are integrally related to the wider geographic, socio-historic, cultural political and institutional settings in which they operate, and that there will be a complex and changing interplay between these different contextual layers throughout the lifetime of a partnership or other form of collaboration.

This notion is echoed by Kolk et al. [131] who state that, "how a partnership actually functions – and thus, can have an impact – also depends on individual factors and the process of interactions, as these can yield not only organizational benefits but also more indirect (trickle) effects within and between the micro, meso and macro levels" (p.13) (see Figure 2). Attention to the close interaction between individual, organizational and wider contextual levels can thus assist us in more deeply understanding the potential that collaborative relationships may play in supporting the achievement of the SDGs.



277  
278 **Figure 2.** Partnership connections and interactions.

279 **Adapted from Kolk et al. [131] and Stott [42].**

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## 280 5. The Personal Dimension in Partnerships

281 Sloan and Oliver [132] note that most scholarship on multi-stakeholder partnerships has  
282 overlooked individual characteristics and interpersonal dynamics. This is further endorsed by Battisti  
283 [11] who argues that it is important to understand cross-sector partnerships from an individual  
284 perspective, not just an organizational one. The “human element” in partnerships and attention to  
285 how individual characteristics such as “personal . . . goals, informal group pressures, and professional  
286 backgrounds” can shape collaborative decisions is also highlighted by Gazley [88] (p.655). Caplan et  
287 al. [132] further suggest that particular attention should be paid to the different incentives that  
288 individuals may have for working in partnership as this will assist understanding of why certain  
289 elements of a partnership are working or not.

290 In addition to assuming different roles as organizational representatives in partnerships,  
291 individuals may also play a catalytic role in promoting and improving this kind of interaction by  
292 acting as ‘partnership brokers’. Also described as ‘bridge builders’, ‘conveners’ or ‘orchestrators’,  
293 these individuals have been specifically singled out for mention in a range of publications due to the  
294 work they undertake in supporting and shaping collaborative relationships between organizations  
295 [19, 28, 135-136]. Indeed, some authors have suggested that those exercising the partnership  
296 brokering role may be a new kind of ‘leader’ or ‘difference maker’ [63,137-139].

297 The importance of ensuring that leaders in a “connected world” have the relational intelligence  
298 “to connect with different people and various stakeholders and to act competently on an  
299 interpersonal and ethical basis” is highlighted by Pless and Marck [12] (pp.1-2). Senge, Hamilton and  
300 Kania endorse this view in their call for ‘system leaders’ able to catalyze collective leadership by  
301 focusing on the larger system rather than parts of it, “fostering reflection and generative  
302 conversations” and promoting a move away from “reactive problem-solving to co-creating the  
303 future” [138] (pp.28-29). Sennett [10] also endorses the demand for reflection and generative  
304 conversations by noting that stronger and more meaningful cooperation can be encouraged through  
305 a willingness by individuals to listen, try to understand different and conflicting viewpoints and  
306 allow differences to surface through debates that provoke, test and challenge assumptions. This is  
307 summarized neatly by Gino [140] who suggests that in successful collaborations, “judgement gives  
308 way to curiosity and people come to see that other perspectives are as valuable as theirs.” (p.6).

309 These arguments clearly position values as central to both personal and organizational  
310 relationships and resonate with the depiction of relational intelligence as incorporating emotional

311 and ethical capabilities which include, “being aware of and understanding one’s own and others’  
312 emotions, values, interests and demands, discriminating among them, critically reflecting on them,  
313 and using this information to guide one’s actions and behavior with respect to people.” [12] (p.2).  
314 Authors such as Bregman [7], Eisler [8], Leadbeater [9] and Sennett [10] further believe that humans  
315 have an innate capacity for cooperation and partnership and that it is interdependence between  
316 people, rather than organizations, and engagement in a dynamic process of cooperation that has  
317 value in and of itself.

318 The views outlined above promote an understanding of partnership that is much more than  
319 simply a vehicle by which different organizations work together to achieve stipulated and concrete  
320 targets such as those outlined in the SDGs. Instead, emphasis is placed on achieving outcomes via  
321 the process of working in partnership (partnering). Furthermore, if this process seeks to enhance the  
322 integration, transformation and systems change that are central to the Sustainable Development  
323 Agenda, then personal connections that are built around values such as empathy, reciprocity and  
324 mutual benefit could be a catalyst for a profound global renewal .

## 325 **6. Exploring Partnerships for the SDGs: Integrating Personal Values**

326 We believe that a relationship lens which focuses on the ongoing value that is derived from  
327 personal connections can offer important insights into how more effective partnerships can be  
328 developed for the achievement of the SDGs and beyond. This will require deeper attention to the core  
329 relational values around which partnerships are built and more exhaustive research into personal  
330 and organizational motivations, aspirations and ambitions for partnering.

331 According to Leary and Acosta [141]: “Two essential requirements for successful close  
332 relationships are that the partners value their relationships with one another, and each person  
333 recognizes that the partner values the relationship”. This notion of mutual benefit is reflected in many  
334 of the principles that have been put forward for those working in partnership, which also include  
335 openness and the ability to communicate feelings or concerns; and fairness and the promotion of  
336 equity between partners so that their inputs into the relationship are equally valued [11, 142]. To  
337 these we may also add the values mentioned by the four 2019 Turner Prize winners who, in their call  
338 for a collaborative ‘win’, placed emphasis on the importance of reciprocity and solidarity. Battisti [11]  
339 also endorses an appreciation of ‘diversity’, noting that: “Differences can be fruitful. While the  
340 partner’s values, attitudes, opinions and approaches might be different and might create cognitive  
341 and emotional tensions, tolerating or working through them is crucial to engage effectively” (p.106).

342 Discussion of collaborative values usually highlights the importance of trust as a central  
343 principle for strong relationships. Sloan and Oliver [132] note that trust-building is a dynamic process  
344 that is built upon both cognitive and affective elements. They describe cognitive elements as  
345 including perceptions of trustworthiness that are based upon expectations of predictable and reliable  
346 behavior while affective dimensions include emotional feelings such as care, concern and good will.  
347 The authors further suggest that “a certain amount of cognitive trust is necessary before affective  
348 trust can develop” (p.1859) and that “interpersonal trust can lay the foundation for the development  
349 of interorganizational trust” (p.1860). Sloan and Oliver [127] further reinforce Perel’s emphasis on the  
350 importance of continuing to explore, learn and grow in relationships, something that is likely to be  
351 enhanced when there is a sense of familiarity, closeness and security between partners [61, 142].

352 Elements of interpersonal relationships will inevitably overlap and find expression in the  
353 organizational connections that form the basis of partnerships, particularly as a balance needs to be  
354 found between process and the achievement of results so that partner efforts are dedicated towards  
355 both a common goal as well as relationship-building [11]. However, although relational drivers for  
356 organizations are not always straightforward and may embrace a complex array of motivations that  
357 can change over time, most organizations appear to espouse an instrumental view of partnering that  
358 is largely based on its usefulness as a means to an end with a conceptualization of partnership as one  
359 in which organizations commit to a relationship that has the potential to achieve goals and impact  
360 that a single partner could not achieve alone (see Section 3 above). It is also worth noting that many  
361 organizations (and the individuals within them) are mandated to work in partnership and built-in

362 reward systems are in place for incentivizing engagement or, conversely, imposing sanctions upon  
 363 those that do not promote this kind of involvement [129]. These understandings of partnership  
 364 contrast substantially with more personal approaches that focus on interdependence between people  
 365 through their engagement in a dynamic process of cooperation that has value in and of itself [42].

366 To bring together and explore different individual and organizational incentives for partnering  
 367 in more detail, we have drawn upon literature that discusses motivations for second language  
 368 learning [143-147]. These categorizations embrace two overlapping dichotomies:

- 369 • **Instrumental vs integrative motivations**- in which instrumental refers to doing something  
 370 as a means to an end in order to achieve a result or practical goal while integrative pertains  
 371 to relational connections and a desire to interact with, and become part, of a broader  
 372 community.
- 373 • **Intrinsic vs extrinsic motivations** - in which intrinsic relates to interest in doing something  
 374 because it is rewarding for its own sake while extrinsic relates to external mandates to do  
 375 so, including the promise of reward(s) or, conversely, to avoid some form of sanction.

376 These motivations have been outlined in Figure 3 to explore some of the key drivers for working  
 377 in partnerships to achieve the SDGs.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Instrumental</b></p> <p>Partners work together in order to achieve SDG targets as part of their organizational and individual missions and work.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Integrative</b></p> <p>Partners work together in order to interact with a broader collaborative community through joined-up, holistic and traversal approaches to the SDGs with other organizations and individuals.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Extrinsic</b></p> <p>Partners work together to meet organizational and individual mandates for achieving SDG targets in order to avoid sanctions and/or obtain clear rewards, e.g. improved reputation; organizational rankings or recognition for individual efforts.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Intrinsic</b></p> <p>Partners work together because of promising prospects for individual and organizational learning and growth linked to the SDGs.</p>

378

379

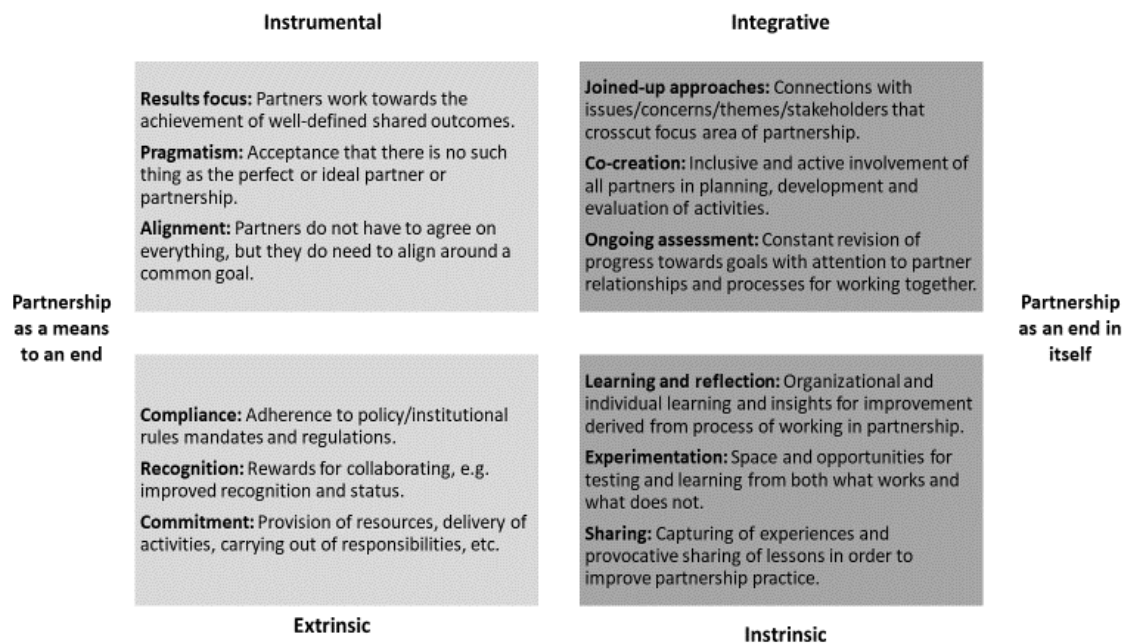
**Figure 3.** Motivations for partnering for the SDGs.

380 Although there is growing appreciation of the role of individuals and personal qualities and  
 381 attributes in partnerships and other collaborative relationships, we believe that the predominant  
 382 reasons for organizations to partner finds expression in the two left-hand quadrants of Figure 3.  
 383 While accepting that partnerships will require equilibrium between different personal and  
 384 organizational motivations and dynamics for working in this way, our premise is that, in order to  
 385 enhance the potential of partnerships for transformation, more work needs to be done to move away  
 386 from purely instrumental and extrinsic reasons for partnering towards recognition of the integrative  
 387 and intrinsic value that partnering can offer, both of which are likely to be derived from a deeper  
 388 appreciation of the importance of inter-personal relationships.

389 To explore this idea in more detail, Figure 4 sets out some of the assumptions that may be made  
 390 in relation to instrumental and extrinsic, and integrative and intrinsic understandings of partnership.  
 391 Within the instrumental category, these are likely to revolve around the importance of impact and

392 how it will be achieved. This results-based focus suggests a pragmatic attitude towards other  
 393 partners, with acknowledgement that each partner is able to contribute different resources and align  
 394 around the achievement of desired goal(s). An integrative stance, meanwhile, will see value in the  
 395 process of developing strong relationships and processes as well as achieving results. Attention will  
 396 be paid to the need for joined-up approaches that involve all the partners working together closely  
 397 while regularly reviewing their connections with acknowledgement that effective partnering  
 398 processes will support the realization of results and attainment of goals(s).

399 Considerations in the extrinsic classification are likely to center around the need for adherence  
 400 to organizational mandates. Such mandates may promote partnering by offering positive incentives  
 401 for engaging in collaborative initiatives and/or sanctions for not doing so. Emphasis will thus be  
 402 placed on commitment to delivery, contribution and allocation of resources and carrying out of  
 403 agreed tasks in order to achieve partnership goals. Intrinsic reasons for partnering, meanwhile, will  
 404 focus on the value of partnering in and of itself, with acknowledgement of the satisfaction that may  
 405 be obtained by working in collaboration, particularly in relation to the learning gained from engaging  
 406 in collaborative processes which can be tested and shared with others.



407

408

Figure 4. Factors that promote involvement in a partnership.

409 Figure 4 may be of practical use as a discussion tool to promote reflection on how different  
 410 partners view their work together and in which quadrant(s) their partnership 'sits'. If there is  
 411 consensus that partners are primarily positioned in the instrumental and extrinsic quadrants, the  
 412 question of how far partners aspire to make a lasting and meaningful contributions to the SDGs may  
 413 be contemplated by inquiring into the possibilities for embracing the integrative and intrinsic values  
 414 that might expand the possibilities for achieving transformational change.

415 Clearly, the elements outlined in Figure 4 are not exhaustive and are intended only to offer an  
 416 indication of some of the factors that might be considered in each category. It is also true that  
 417 partnering relationships must be viewed as dynamic; both relative to their specific and changing  
 418 operational contexts and to the continual negotiation that takes place between partners at both  
 419 individual and organizational levels regarding the terms and conditions of their evolving  
 420 relationship [11,42].

## 421 7. Conclusions

422 If, as the organizational consultant and psychotherapist Esther Perel asserts, “the quality of our  
423 relationships determines the quality of our lives” [148], then the quality of both our individual and  
424 organizational relationships will also determine the quality of the partnerships that are developed to  
425 achieve the SDGs. This paper suggests that if partnerships are to meet the United Nations  
426 transformational and inclusive agenda for the SDGs, then the role that interpersonal connections play  
427 within them, and how these link to organizational interactions in multi-stakeholder partnerships,  
428 must be given greater consideration. This will involve inquiry and dialogue around the links between  
429 these two domains, and how the values, motivations and dynamics they encompass influence the  
430 development, influence and impact of diverse collaborative arrangements.

431 Our research indicates that explorations of partnerships for the SDGs would benefit from the  
432 application of psychological and psychoanalytical approaches [132,140]. In the same vein, it is also  
433 worth noting that recognition of the value of psychology in building and supporting sustainable  
434 development is receiving increased attention [149,150]. According to Di Fabio [150], the “psychology  
435 of sustainability and sustainable development” rests upon approaches and leadership that design  
436 and construct organizational development and well-being through “the promotion of relationships  
437 and positive narratives in organizational contexts in everyday life.” It is our belief that  
438 acknowledgement of the importance of personal relationships and narratives in partnership  
439 arrangements has the potential to ensure meaningful and lasting contributions to the SDGs that might  
440 ultimately ‘transform our world’ [20,21].

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453 shortlist four artists for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation. The Turner was founded by a  
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