

# **PARTNERSHIPS AS A PANACEA FOR ADDRESSING GLOBAL PROBLEMS? ON RATIONALE, CONTEXT, ACTORS, IMPACT AND LIMITATIONS**

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## **BRIEF BIO**

Ans Kolk is full professor at the University of Amsterdam Business School, The Netherlands. Her research has focused on corporate responsibility and sustainability in relation to international business firms, and their interactions with local, national and international stakeholders. Topics of research have included poverty and international development; bottom of the pyramid and subsistence markets; partnerships; codes of conduct and non-financial reporting; stakeholders and governance; climate change and energy. She has published numerous articles in international reputable journals, as well as book chapters, and also books. In 2009, she received the Aspen Institute Faculty Pioneer European Award (Lifetime Achievement Award) (<http://www.abs.uva.nl>; [akolk@uva.nl](mailto:akolk@uva.nl)).

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## ABSTRACT

This chapter examines partnerships and their peculiarities, based on recent research from various disciplines, in the context of the large problems faced by global society. These problems are very complex, usually cross national boundaries, and cannot easily be 'solved' by one single actor. Previous 'unilateral' attempts to address them have not been particularly successful, and there are limits to what a single actor can do. Cooperation also enables different actors to leverage their resources and know how. It is therefore that the past decades has seen a rapid growth and spread of several types of cross-sector collaboration: public-nonprofit, public-private, private-nonprofit, and tripartite partnerships involving government, companies and non-governmental organizations. The chapter first gives a more generic overview of the rationale for cross-sector partnerships, and the advantages of partnerships for different actors involved, not specifically geared to the global context. This helps to set the stage for the further sections that consider partnerships for addressing global problems, and that expose the complexities of actor categorizations and collaborations, of partnership contexts, and of impact at different interaction levels. Some of these aspects have been explored in different sets of literature, but deserve more (integrated) attention in research and in the practice of partnerships. Several schemes and conceptualizations are suggested to facilitate next steps and further insights into the multi-faceted nature of partnerships that address global problems. Reflections on limitations of research thus far and recent trends – including a possible move beyond partnerships – will be offered as well.

## INTRODUCTION

To address complex social and environmental problems that often cross boundaries and cannot easily be solved by one single actor, a multitude of partnerships has emerged, involving government agencies, companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The past decades has seen a rapid growth and spread of several types of cross-sector<sup>1</sup> collaboration: public-nonprofit, public-private,<sup>2</sup> private-nonprofit, and tripartite partnerships. Particularly tripartite forms of collaboration, that combine the competences, skills and expertise of the three different types of actors, have been regarded as most suitable for the 'wicked' issues at stake, because they are supposedly able to overcome their individual limitations (Austin 2000a; Kolk *et al.* 2008; Warner and Sullivan 2008). These include market failures, governance failures and good intentions' failures resulting from respectively single-actor corporate, public and nonprofit activities (Kolk *et al.* 2008; OECD 2006). Partnerships have thus been hailed for their ability to address several existing 'gaps' related to regulation, participation, implementation, resources and learning (e.g. Fransen and Kolk 2007; Pattberg *et al.* 2012; Pinkse and Kolk 2012), or, using a twofold categorization that captures comparable aspects, to counter a democratic (or legitimacy) as well as an implementation (or effectiveness) deficit (Bäckstrand 2006a; Schäferhoff *et al.* 2009).

This chapter presents and discusses research insights from various disciplines, and their limitations thus far in shedding light on the multi-faceted nature of partnerships that

aim to address global problems. It exposes the complexities of actor categorizations and collaborations, of partnership contexts, and of impact at different interaction levels. First, however, a more generic overview of the rationale for partnerships is given, considering role, functions and drivers, and advantages for different actors involved in general, not specifically geared to the global context. This helps to set the stage for the further sections that consider partnerships for addressing global problems. It should be noted that partnerships as discussed in this chapter do not need to entail 'global' solutions or be comprehensively global in nature (e.g. at the global level); rather the focus is on partnerships that address complex global problems such as climate change, food security, and more broadly poverty and underdevelopment. This means that a single (Northern) company can be involved in such a partnership, e.g. to help reduce child mortality in a developing country, which is a global problem (included in the Millennium Development Goals and prevalent in many countries). Accordingly, with this macro objective, meso and micro considerations of the partnership (embodied, respectively, in the interorganizational collaboration with e.g. an NGO, and the involvement of its employees and customers) are relevant as well, as these are geared to helping address, in the end, a global problem.

**THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS**

Partnerships fulfill specific functions, for which many, often slightly different, classifications have been used (see e.g. Andanova *et al.* 2009; Bäckstrand 2008; Beisheim 2012; Pattberg *et al.* 2012; Schäferhoff *et al.* 2009). The range is indicated by Schäferhoff *et al.* (2009: 457) who refer to functions “from advocacy and awareness-raising, knowledge exchange, research and development, standard-setting and implementation, to service provision, and the creation of markets”. As an illustration of how this variety had been made concrete for specific academic and/or practical purposes, Table 1 contains information from different sources. The top part (1A) shows a list of functions of the partnerships for sustainable development that were adopted in the context of the international discussions related to the Millennium Development Goals, while the subsequent part (1B) distinguishes three types of partnerships, also focused on sustainable development in this same realm. 1C gives an overview of partnership types as identified in surveys amongst practitioners involved in business-NGO collaboration, and 1D to related motivations for collaboration. Together they exemplify, respectively, a more governance-oriented approach that starts from the role of government (1A and 1B), and a rather practical one focused on concrete partnership foci of companies and NGOs (1C and 1D). They represent perspectives that will be discussed later in this chapter as well, where relevant.

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The role of governments, and thus their 'failure', deserves specific attention given that they have traditionally been seen as responsible for 'solving' societal problems or, put differently, for providing collective goods. One of the oldest definitions of the partnership concept from a management scholar likewise underlines that actors “cooperatively attempt to solve a problem or issue of mutual concern that is in some way identified with a public policy agenda item” (Waddock 1991: 481-2). Partnerships have thus often emerged in response to inadequate or failed attempts at regulation, for example, because government instruments are too 'blunt'/broad for the complex peculiarities of an issue that also frequently covers multiple jurisdictions, with regulatory processes taking very long, sometimes related to

political sensitivities that hamper a more effective approach. There may also be situations in which public benefits can be realized much more efficiently through a collaborative involvement of companies. On the other hand, particularly companies may engage in partnerships in an attempt to pre-empt regulation, as they tend to prefer voluntary action to externally-imposed (legal) requirements. Concurrently, partnerships can also help cover things that may otherwise have remained 'unregulated'. Examples include climate change activities for other than the most polluting sectors or in countries that are not part of international agreements; and reduction of water use, which companies now sometimes tackle via voluntary collaboration in their global supply chain and/or with other actors. In this way, partnerships may, if effective, sometimes even reduce the need for (further) regulation, or help reshape the arrangements (to be) put in place.

Hence, specifically vis-à-vis the role government, there is a variety of possible situations: partnerships may 'replace' regulation (i.e. instead of having regulation, partnerships function); they can pre-empt regulation, but also precede it (i.e. set the stage); and they can 'follow' or supplement regulation (thus have more an implementation role). In addition, regulation may sometimes be needed to enable partnerships. Finally, partnerships can include regulators, be it as direct participants or through more indirect involvement. The latter may consist of e.g. providing expertise, supporting services, facilitating implementation, brokering, convening, delivery and outreach. The variety of degrees of government involvement has been captured in a continuum of governance forms, with, on one extreme, public regulation (without real involvement of other, private actors<sup>3</sup>), and private self-regulation, without public actors, on the other end (Bäckstrand 2008). Except for public regulation, partnerships may play a role in all the other variants, in which involvement of government declines with each 'step', while those of other actors increases.

Rather separate from the link to government, companies and NGOs may have their own additional reasons for engaging in partnerships, as part of a broad conglomerate of aspects mentioned (e.g. Austin 2000b; Selsky and Parker 2005; Van Huijstee *et al.* 2007). Part D in Table 1 summarizes the main motivations that have come to the fore in the business-NGO context, and which relate to types of partnerships in 1C. For both parties, there are reasons related to increased access to knowledge, experience, networks and resources, that may translate into innovative new products, services or solutions, better abilities to envision future developments or higher operational efficiencies (more optimal use of current resources and methods). Mentioned as well are greater leverage and impact, and a possibly improved reputation and credibility amongst internal and external stakeholders. It should be noted that the importance of the aspects listed in Table 1(D) exhibits some differences between companies and NGOs. A recent survey amongst corporate and NGO representatives involved in partnerships in the UK showed that access to funding was the top reason mentioned by NGOs (95 per cent; this was 7 per cent for business), while companies prioritized reputation and credibility (92 per cent; this was 57 per cent for NGOs) (C&E 2011). The 2010 version reported comparable figures, except for the higher importance that NGOs then attached to the reputational effects of partnerships: 70 per cent (C&E 2010). For other motivations, differences were much smaller between business and NGO respondents, with efficiency mentioned as less important, compared to other aspects, by both types of actors (companies only scored access to funding lower).

Factors related to legitimacy, reputation and credibility figure prominently amongst the reasons for partnering, for governments, business and NGOs. Consecutive global citizen surveys show that trust in all three types has declined in recent years; amongst them, however, government scores consistently lower than business, with NGOs ranking highest

(Edelman 2009, 2011, 2012). Interestingly, while government is the least trusted institution, it is, at the same time, usually seen as most responsible for helping solve global problems, not business or NGOs that are both trusted more (though to varying degrees). When asked explicitly whether business should act alone to help solve global issues, there was overwhelming support for the view that companies have to partner with governments and NGOs, while the option that business would play no role was rejected (Edelman 2009). In the 2011 survey amongst corporate and NGO representatives in the UK, government was also mentioned to be very often involved in their key partnerships: by acting as a catalyst on the issues involved; by setting frameworks and public policy directions to which partnerships align, or, alternatively, that partnerships try to influence; or by providing (additional) funding (C&E 2011).

Especially tripartite partnerships thus seem to be a route to reckon with different degrees of trust and expectations from society, while generating mutual benefits and reducing or addressing limitations of individual company, government or NGO action. The need for such collaboration becomes even more pressing if we move away from the generic (usually developed-country) setting to developing countries, in view of missing institutions (institutional gaps) and the much more common prevalence of many problems related to poverty. At the same time, the specific context matters considerably in shaping partnerships as well as their potential impact. Moreover, in case of partnerships for global problems in particular, the wide diversity of actors at the various levels, from ‘global to local’ should be considered as well. The next section draws some attention to the multi-layered nature of governments, companies as well as NGOs once partnerships start to address global problems in a set-up with more partners than just two (the latter can be the case in e.g. a straightforward 1:1 business-NGO collaboration for a specific project or program). In the process, it will also nuance the straightforward ‘triad’ picture often used for partnerships.

As shown in the upper half of Figure 1, it is rather common to visualize partnership options in a tripartite manner, for example, in the form of circles, or as components in a pyramid representing the three types. While perfectly understandable and useful for presentation purposes, it should not be forgotten that this a simplification that does not do justice to the complexity of the separate actors, especially in the international domain, as will be explained below. Moreover, this triad is sometimes mentioned/assumed to embody the ‘state’, the ‘market’ and ‘civil society’, which seems rather problematic. While this chapter is not the place to go into this longer-standing debate, it is worth noting that the state is more than government, the market wider than only companies, and civil society more encompassing than only NGOs (e.g. Bebbington *et al.* 2008; Fowler and Biekart 2011; Mitlin *et al.* 2007). For this reason, rather than mentioning the three broader realms (let alone characterizing them as ‘sectors’, see note 1), the actor labels are used here.

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**DIFFERENTIATING ACTOR CATEGORIES IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT**

While the complexity of development activities from international (‘Northern’-based) to local (as carried out in the ‘South’) and the range of actors involved are known and discussed in fields such as development studies and international management, the partnership literature tends to adhere to broader generalizations of the three types of actors.

Publications on partnerships between multinational enterprises (MNE) and NGOs in an international context, for example, have focused on other aspects, such as new business models (Dahan *et al.* 2010), or firms' legitimacy (Marano and Tashman 2012) or entrepreneurship process (Webb *et al.* 2010), with only limited differentiation of within-actor categories. In addition to considering differences within the three actor types, it is also important to note that collaboration to further development purposes frequently takes place in areas characterized by institutional voids and missing market actors, which leads to complex partnerships with multiple partners, often considerably more than three (Rivera-Santos *et al.* 2012).

The lower part of Figure 1 sketches a very basic picture to help 'disentangle' partnerships, considering the three types of actors and the links between those who operate with an international focus from a base in the North (i.e. Western, OECD countries, labeled as home country) to undertake activities in/for the South (at the national or local level, in so-called host countries). In between the international and the local levels, there may well be a regional center or unit that takes a coordination/control role, as is often the case for MNEs (Rugman and Verbeke 2008), but can also occur to some extent for governments (regional intergovernmental organizations such as the EU or Nafta or regional development banks such the Inter-American, African or Asian Development Bank) or NGOs, although less frequently (cf. Berger *et al.* 2004; Yaziji and Doh 2009).

As the Figure is just a rough indication, Table 2 includes some further components for each of the actor types. Below some explanation will be given for each, respectively companies, governments and NGOs, in view of the fact that each actor can consist of multiple (sub)organizations within the same category. Moreover, it is acknowledged that the use of 'North' and 'South' (as done for the NGO category in particular) has its limitations, as has the possible 'developed'/'developing' alternative. It is not the terminology as such, however, but the underlying phenomena that deserve attention.

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*Companies* that become involved in partnerships to help address global problems will often be MNEs that may have local subsidiaries (or regional centers) that can play a role. In that situation, activities are likely to be instigated from headquarters in the home country and involve these units at lower levels, although the degree to which these are actually owned and can be controlled from the corporate center may show wide variety, even within one MNE for different business units, or upstream/downstream activities (upstream generally refers to production, downstream to sales). The type of industry is important to consider as well, as global commodities, where many partnerships have emerged in the past decade, are usually characterized by a different set-up, in which MNEs are almost at the end of the value chain, while the beginning is often in a developing country, with various actors such as traders and exporters in between. An example for the coffee supply chain is given in Figure 2 for illustration. MNEs then need to involve and thus 'manage' all the steps from the agricultural producer to the end consumer, and relationships are therefore much more indirect (and arms' length) than for those that have local subsidiaries or affiliates. Still, in the latter case MNEs may also have to involve unrelated (local) companies if they engage in partnerships for development.

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Within companies it matters which department is charged with the partnership (and if multiple are involved, how this is coordinated, and which one is leading). Moreover, there is the possibility that a more or less 'separate' corporate foundation deals with a partnership, and with the activities carried out in developing countries. While organizational issues within an MNE have been studied extensively in international management, this is much less the case for their coordination of partnership activities; the 'make-buy-collaborate' spectrum (with 'make' as the equivalent of in-house, and 'buy' as an 'outsourced' mode) has been explored for corporate social responsibility more generally (e.g. Husted 2003). Corporate foundations have received some attention, but mostly in relation to philanthropy, for which they are seen as responsible for contracting/coordinating charitable contributions hardly related to core business (Husted 2003; Pedrini and Minciullo 2010; Westhues and Einwiller 2006). However, when moving out of the traditional (Northern) settings for foundations in the US or Europe into development issues, corporate foundations sometimes have a different role concerning community development in areas in which the company has operations (e.g. in the mining industry) or from which their agricultural produce originates, thus involving small farmers at the beginning of a global value chain (e.g. in coffee production; Kolk 2013).

Moving to the *government* perspective in Figure 1 and Table 2, some things may be comparable to companies in terms of how to organize a partnership from the 'home country' (where its 'headquarters' are) to the host country; and which ministries/agencies to involve domestically (and which one coordinates/leads) and abroad, where embassies and/or local government agencies may have a role, as well as international organizations (such as the World Bank). The 'make-buy-collaborate' decision also applies here, although in an adjusted form given the public nature of the actor and of the goods (cf. Rangan *et al.* 2006). At the same time, there is always the question to what extent 'true' partnerships are involved or whether a contractual mode prevails. As donor, relationships with companies (e.g. in the case of private sector development programs) and with NGOs (in the more traditional official development assistance form) will be peculiar, and frequently close to incentive-based 'partnerships' with government aid policies and ideologies shaping recipient activities and approaches (cf. Bebbington *et al.* 2008; Johansson *et al.* 2010; Mitlin *et al.* 2007; Pedersen 2005). Often, governments will stipulate the involvement of local actors (companies and/or NGOs depending on kind of funding), thus shaping the type of partnerships and the (North-South) relationships involved. The 'contractor' role also affects the interaction of donor governments with their local counterparts at the (sub)national levels (ministries, provinces, villages, communities).

Northern development NGOs face a difficult position in their attempts to reconcile a variety of pressures and requirements (Bebbington *et al.* 2008; Derksen and Verhallen 2008; Mitlin *et al.* 2007). In addition to their own operational activities for development, they may channel funds with concomitant accountability mechanisms to Southern NGOs that serve as 'subcontracted service providers', seek to maintain relationships with those organizations that are more local member-based community (grassroots) and/or advocacy oriented, in connection with their own original objectives for societal and political change as well as improvement in the situation of the poor, while concurrently competing for and generating funding, often also from individual donors, themselves. The way in which international NGOs organize their international activities from their home country in the North all the way to host countries in the South shows a considerable variety, somewhat comparable to MNEs. This can range from collaboration with more or less independent organizations (sometimes under a loose joint umbrella) in the South, via a (con)federate structure, to a unitary

'centralized' set-up, with 'subsidiaries' (Yaziji and Doh 2009; cf. Hearn 2007). Sometimes, and particularly when the same name is used for all units worldwide, those outside the NGO may have difficulty to grasp the degree to which local organizations can follow their own approaches or have to adhere to one and the same standard; and also whether and to what extent partnership agreements concluded with a Northern ('holding') NGO (turn out to) apply to their Southern counterparts.

In addition to Southern NGOs more or less related to a Northern one, there are also local NGOs that carry out development assistance (service/contracting) activities, and those involved in advocacy and grassroots activism, but the clarity of the differences between the various types and roles seem to have diminished somewhat over the years. Hearn (2007) raised questions as to the degree to which African NGOs can really be seen as 'non-government' (in view of their search for and dependence on government/donor funding) and as representing society (given the apparent and frequent focus to promote their own, entrepreneurial objectives). Using quotes from various sources ("the way to make money is to set up your own NGO", "this is in the first place a business"), the observations by Hearn (2007: 1102-3) illustrate the blurring boundaries between profit and nonprofit. This is also shown in the growth of different types of social entrepreneurs, 'benefit corporations' and NGOs that engage in commercial activities – a myriad of forms that is even more difficult to grasp in Southern countries than it is already in the North.

A final aspect to take into account is the complex setting for partnerships for development, which can take place in areas that suffer from weak governance and formal institutional voids, with a prevalence of informal institutions (Rivera-Santos *et al.* 2012; Webb *et al.* 2010).<sup>4</sup> In such a context, tripartite partnerships with multiple parties may help to fill institutional gaps as no single type of actor(s) is likely to be able to provide the whole range of institutions needed. Concurrently, at least some of the partners may be (only or most) familiar with informal governance mechanisms (such as in-kind contributions or community-based personal relationships) that suit the local situation better, to which others (from Northern-base home countries) may not be accustomed as they are used to relying on formal ones (contracts and equity-related property rights) (Rivera-Santos *et al.* 2012). This co-existence of multiple governance mechanisms and partners' different traditions, and the range of possible and varied institutional contexts, are aspects to be considered as well in assessing the role and impact of partnerships.

## **THE IMPACT OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTIONS TO ADDRESS GLOBAL PROBLEMS**

In recent years, attention has grown for the impact of partnerships, particularly in helping address global problems. Despite the introduction of several tools, such an assessment is very difficult, however, due to the frequently wide diversity and multiple objectives, lack of data, the absence of control groups and baselines, and the phenomenon that partnerships are often 'moving targets' that change over the years, with growing experience and 'learning by doing'. Complexities also stem from the existence of multiple partnerships as well as other initiatives to address the same purpose, and the fact that some activities, such as awareness, advocacy, capacity-building and empowerment (see Table 1), are hard to measure. Compared to ongoing partnerships, it may be easier for new focused collaborative efforts that have clear goals and an in-built evaluation mechanism from the start. Assessing impact also seems less complicated if one takes a more limited view, to consider, for example, only the realization of specific organizational objectives of the participating actors (for example, raising money by NGOs, or an improved reputation for companies).



Nevertheless, the type of goal also plays an important role in this respect: the broader and higher the ambitions, the more difficult it may be to achieve them, also because more partners are likely to be involved. Specific projects, programs or transactions are easier to realize than systemic or societal change (cf. Austin 2000b; Waddock 1991); informal, distant settings increase complexities (Rivera-Santos *et al.* 2012).

What has remained underexposed in this debate are the more indirect effects of partnerships, due to interactions at multiple levels: not only at the macro level, e.g. from North to South, but also within partnering organizations (which can be located in several regions) and by individuals working for or affected by the organizations or the partnership. ‘Impact’ on the social good or the global problem targeted can take place in more subtle ways as well via stakeholder interactions that may ‘trickle’ from micro (individual) to meso (organizational) and macro (societal), or vice versa (cf. Kolk *et al.* 2010) (see Figure 3 for an overview). For example, if an employee of a partnering organization says positive things about a partnership to address a global issue such as poverty to colleagues, customers, family, friends or acquaintances, then the word about the collaboration and the cause can spread easily, raising awareness and perhaps stimulating others to become active. This is facilitated by the fact that people have multiple roles and belong to several stakeholder groups at the same time (e.g. one can simultaneously be an employee, consumer, voter, and member of a non-governmental organization or political party) (cf. Wolfe and Putler 2002). In a sense, this is somewhat comparable to the notion of ‘civic action’ that also considers the different capacities of persons who aim to “make society work better for more people” (Biekart and Fowler 2012: 182). Both approaches in fact showcase micro-level interactions within and across ‘sectors’ that can trickle up and round, and thus further the cause and increase the impact of the partnership on the global problem being addressed.

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This chapter argues that it is importance to recognize the interlinkages and how micro and meso interactions may have an influence on partnerships that address global problems. Levels have tended to be treated separately in different bodies of literature, as will be explained in the subsections that follow and that offer some reflections on each of them. These are not meant to provide a comprehensive overview, but rather to present some insights on the role of partnerships and the interactions in relation to the rationale, actor and context issues discussed above. This may also serve as input for further research and for practitioner and scholarly debates about partnerships.

**Macro-level perspectives**

Most of the discussion at the macro level has focused on the implementation (effectiveness) and democratic (legitimacy) deficits supposed to be addressed by partnerships. Studies that often originate from political science, public policy and international relations have considered the implications for these governance dimensions (e.g. Bäckstrand 2008; Liese and Beisheim 2011; Pattberg *et al.* 2012; Schäferhoff *et al.* 2009). What has come to the fore here as well are difficulties of establishing the yardstick against which to assess partnerships (i.e. ideal-type institutions or ‘real-existing’ institutions), and the importance of taking into account institutional design factors as well as ‘complex’ performance that includes unintended side effects, and goes beyond a ‘simple’ benchmarking exercise of an individual partnership and its objective(s). In evaluating effectiveness in terms of realization of overall

objectives – or as “aggregate measure of (or judgment about) the merit or worth of an activity” (OECD-DAC 2002: 21) – the development literature has made a distinction between output, outcome and impact. Output refers to the first, or immediate result of an intervention or activity; outcome to changes in behaviour of those targeted or in the application/implementation of services, knowledge or standards; and impact to the most far-reaching of the three, which relates to bringing sustainable and structural solutions to the problem(s) at stake, reckoning with possible negative side effects (Liese and Beisheim 2011; OECD-DAC 2002; Schäferhoff *et al.* 2009).

In view of the difficulties of measuring impact, most studies have focused on assessing output, with mixed results. Especially partnerships for sustainable development that have been registered at the United Nations (UN), following agreements on Millennium Development Goals at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, turn out to have been often inactive or ineffective, except for some in specific areas such as energy, water and health (Pattberg *et al.* 2012; Schäferhoff *et al.* 2009; Szulecki *et al.* 2011). The ‘measure’ used to assess this often involved a so-called ‘function-output fit’ to see how the programs, reports, activities or organizational structures related to the functions originally planned (cf. part A in Table 1) (Dellas 2012; Szulecki *et al.* 2011). As such, this is a rather limited assessment, reflecting lack of data beyond public UN databases. At the same time, it is helpful to consider the specific foci and tasks of partnerships. Another study, on 21 of these international partnerships for sustainable development, aimed to evaluate output, outcome and impact in a qualitative manner based on documents and interviews, taking the type of partnership into account (see part B in Table 1; Liese and Beisheim 2011). The partnerships were broadly categorized as having low, medium and high overall effectiveness, with almost 60% being placed in the middle group; only two (service) partnerships were labeled highly effective (and the remainder low).

These macro-level studies of effectiveness of partnerships have tended to not only pay most attention to output, based on (often document-based) assessments of globally-oriented partnerships (involving international organizations), but also to skip the organizational and/or individual levels, and the dynamic interactions involved. In some recent management research, these aspects have come to the fore, especially in case of partnerships in contexts characterized by institutional gaps. Examples include Kolk and Lenfant 2012; Mair and Marti 2009; Mair *et al.* 2012; Reffico and Márquez 2012). The link with the more macro-oriented literature on development impacts has not really been made, however. This was done in the context of supply-chain partnerships (see Figure 2), where effectiveness was explored for the case of coffee in (post-)conflict Central African countries. Output was approached as the equivalent of organizational achievements regarding the creation and strengthening of cooperatives for small farmers; outcome as effects on coffee prices, income and living conditions of these beneficiaries; and impact as broader institutional implications concerning a reduction of conflict or tensions, inter alia, due to more contacts through reconciliation programs and joint cultivation instead of fighting.<sup>5</sup> Based on a range of primary and secondary sources, positive effects were seen for all three aspects. It should be noted, however, that the partnerships in this study took place in (post-)conflict settings and involved business-NGO partnerships, sometimes supported by Western donor agencies, and were thus rather different in nature than the government-focused international partnerships mentioned in the preceding (and following) paragraphs.

This thus not only points at issues of context but also at different degrees and forms of legitimacy, which is the second component often assumed to be addressed by partnerships (in addition to effectiveness, see the introductory section of this chapter).

Particularly in the international partnerships for sustainable development, attention has been paid to input as well as output legitimacy (Bäckstrand 2006b; Dellas 2012). Input refers to a balanced representation of affected stakeholders in decision-making as well as accountability and transparency, while output relates to effectiveness in the sense that legitimacy stems from the realization of results. Dellas (2012) took the function-output function to conclude that output legitimacy of international water partnerships was relatively high, also due to more resources and higher involvement of companies than in other areas. Bäckstrand (2006b) focused on institutional effectiveness (leadership, policy coherence, clear formulation of objectives), given that problem-solving capacity in terms of goal-attainment is difficult to assess. Liese and Beisheim (2011) explored degrees of institutionalization, not so much to assess output legitimacy as such, but to look for possible determinants of effectiveness more generally, for which they also considered process management, governance structures, resources, capacity building, learning and stakeholder inclusion. Schäferhoff *et al.* (2009) mentioned inclusiveness and accountability as key components of legitimacy.

Regardless of the precise conceptualization, however, studies demonstrate serious concerns regarding legitimacy, with limited inclusiveness and weak accountability mechanisms (Bäckstrand 2006b; Fransen and Kolk 2007; Pattberg *et al.* 2012; Schäferhoff *et al.* 2009). Partnerships for sustainable development turn out to be most often implemented by international organizations, OECD governments or Northern-based (often donor-funded) NGOs in areas where there are already many activities, not in those where the problems and needs are greatest. They thus do not emerge in low-governance areas and hardly include local communities, with affected stakeholders being underrepresented as well. Business involvement is very limited in the partnerships registered at the UN, although not only there, as this was also found to apply to international partnerships for climate change (Pinkse and Kolk 2012). Interestingly, while the context of the Millennium Development Goals appeared not to offer a framework for inclusion of business interests across the board, it did lead to the introduction of partnerships on technologies that have sparked some controversy (such as nuclear energy, PVC and water purification chemicals) (Mert and Chan 2012).

Regarding factors that influence effectiveness, a high degree of institutionalization (which can include clear decision-making processes, rules and monitoring mechanisms, staffing, organizational and financial resources,) appears to play a positive role (Pattberg *et al.* 2012), but not in the case of knowledge partnerships (see Table 1, part B; Liese and Beisheim 2011). Level and quality of participation seem to matter particularly for standard-setting partnerships, whereas service partnerships require partners with sufficient resources as well as those that are knowledgeable about the local situation and its implementation requirements. It is also mentioned that leadership and management, internal governance structures, and resources and partners need to be arranged to ensure success (Beisheim 2012); these aspects relate directly to the meso level of partnerships that will be discussed next. Still, it should be noted that these generic conclusions may not hold so much in settings where institutions are weak or non-existent, and/or informal governance mechanisms prevail (Rivera-Santos *et al.* 2012). Partnerships may be locally-adapted as well, with some international partnerships being implemented rather differently across countries, as Chan (2012) found for China and India, where the degree of government involvement (also in the shape of 'official NGOs') was much larger in China, with India showing a much more diverse and larger NGO participation.

**Linking macro and meso perspectives**

Over the years, there has been large interest in the meso level and the range of aspects related to interorganizational collaboration, from formation and implementation to outcomes (cf. Austin and Seitanidi 2012; Selsky and Parker 2005). Except for the few publications mentioned in the preceding section, however, the linkages to the macro level has been limited, as those oriented at the meso level have embedded their work in management and organization studies and marketing, using theoretical frameworks that underexpose the implications for the global problems addressed by the partnerships. Still, insights from this research are potentially relevant for the macro perspective, as the collaborative efforts can trickle to that level, as explained above (see Figure 3). Therefore, this section will briefly discuss the main issues of this body of work, which has paid most attention to business-NGO partnerships (e.g. Berger et al. 2004; Dahan *et al.* 2010; Den Hond *et al.* 2012; Elkington and Fennell 1998; Kolk and Lenfant 2012a; Le Ber and Branzei 2010; Rondinelli and London 2003; Seitanidi and Crane 2009; Webb *et al.* 2010; Yaziji and Doh 2009). In view of the abundance of studies, it merely presents some insights important for the practice of partnerships, and that help to clarify roles and possible impacts.

Related to the reasons for companies and NGOs to engage in partnerships, as indicated in Table 1 (part D), many publications have explored the actual organizational and operational processes, and the factors that appear to influence ‘success or failure’. Most often evidence is collected from multiple case studies and/or expert interviews with practitioners. Several authors provide guidance to practitioners in decision-making on cooperation. Table 3 contains six basic questions on the strategic criteria for assessing whether and, if so, with what intensity parties are recommended to collaborate, and two other questions for appraising the effectiveness of subsequent implementation. Together, these cover especially the initial selection as well as the institutionalization phases of partnerships; in between is a partnership design stage that includes experimentation, adaptation and operationalization (Seitanidi and Crane 2009).

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Insert Table 3 here  
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Paying most attention to the process of partnering, Berger *et al.* (2004) identify six ‘mis-es’ that often characterize partnerships: misunderstandings, misallocation of costs and benefits, mismatches of power, mismatched partners, misfortunes of time, and mistrust. These are included and explained in Table 4, with some explanation. Following from this, Table 5 contains more information about possible ways to avoid or diminish these predictable problems. The first route is to ensure a good fit between the company and the NGO, in principle on all the nine subdimensions distinguished in the top part of Table 5. Still, Berger *et al.* (2004) recognize that this may be rather difficult, and while some fit aspects may increase in the course of the partnership due to learning effects, the ones to prioritize are mission fit, resource fit, management fit and evaluation fit. The second approach consists of a proper consideration of the best structural configuration of a (potential/candidate) partner organization, for both the company and the NGO in question, and of the partnership itself given the structural characteristics of all three. Each peculiarity has its pros and cons, however, and in that sense there is no optimal ‘solution’.

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Insert Tables 4 and 5 here  
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It might be assumed that the better the various aspects are handled, the higher the likelihood that the objectives of a partnership can be realized, with thus also beneficial effects for the global problem targeted. However, how easy it is to assess overall effectiveness or impact also depends on the degree to which targets are or can be specified, and thus also how ambitious they are. This also applies to efficiency, a measure that especially business partners may want to use to establish a cost/benefit analysis of inputs/resources in relation to results (Gourville and Rangan 2004; Kolk *et al.* 2008; OECD-DAC 2002). Particularly partnerships that aim to address global problems are likely to suffer from the complexity that outputs and outcomes can be evaluated, but that impact is difficult, as outlined in the previous section on the macro level already. This may also be due to the fact that such partnerships often do not involve a ‘simple’ 1:1 collaboration but that multiple parties are involved, and, especially in the case of international development activities, undertaken in difficult, and often rather different, contexts than the (Northern) home-country setting.

Furthermore, 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 (cf. Kolk *et al.* 2010; Seitanidi and Ryan 2007; see Figure 3). Although mission fit, management fit, workforce fit and cultural fit (see Table 5) to some extent relate to these micro-level aspects, Berger *et al.* (2004) appear to treat them more in a one-off manner, not so much in connection with relational processes and interactions. These are aspects that will be discussed somewhat more below.

### **Adding micro-level perspectives**

Partnership research has recently started to pay more attention to the role of individuals and their interactions, but the number of empirical studies is still rather limited. This lack of evidence on the micro level has also been noted more generally in the past few years, in relation to corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Aguinis and Glavas 2012) and strategic management/organization (Felin and Foss 2005). Building on Figure 3 that outlined the links between micro, meso and macro, Figure 4 gives an overview of possible micro-level interactions in relation to partnering organizations. There is a central role for the employee who is involved in (or becomes informed about) the partnership. As such, this builds on broader insights about the importance of employees as facilitators of and possible proponents for implementation and communication of brand and company activities, also vis-à-vis a range of stakeholders, including customers (Bolton *et al.* 2011; Burmann and Zeplin 2005; Du *et al.* 2010). According to a recent global citizen survey, 50 per cent of respondents regard ‘regular employees’ as highly credible in providing information about a company, a score similar to NGO representatives, and much higher than CEOs or governmental officials/regulators (Edelman 2012). For such mechanisms to work effectively, however, employees need to have positive job and organizational perceptions (cf. Brown and Lam 2008; Maxham *et al.* 2008).

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Insert Figure 4 here  
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There have been a few recent studies on employees in relation to CSR initiatives more generally, but these have emphasized the need for further investigation, as top-down approaches – focused on managers – have predominated and the active involvement of

employees has been largely neglected (Bolton *et al.* 2010; Van der Voort *et al.* 2009). This was demonstrated in a partnership context by Seitanidi (2009) who, on the basis of research on NGO employees, showed the missed opportunities due to their too limited involvement in all stages of the partnership. This in turn was said to likely hamper effective implementation and harm the organization's reputation. Drawing on expert interviews from multiple cases, Berger *et al.* (2006) took a somewhat different approach by focusing on the positive effects for employees from partnerships. They found that some employees experienced both intra- en interorganizational identification as well as community and relationship building as a result of the partnership activities. The outreach to partner organizations and the involvement in the partnership created emotional attachments that added to employee learning from cognitive reflections.

Referring to Figure 4, Berger *et al.* (2006) thus also considered the link to partner organizations to some extent. This was done in more detail by Le Ber and Branzei (2010), who explored relational processes in business-nonprofit partnerships, particularly how and to what extent roles were (re)calibrated in response to needs of counterparts at partner organizations and the effect for the momentum of success or failure. In this respect, relational attachment to the partner organization played a role as well, but this could be eroded in case of partner complacency and/or disillusionment. This study thus helped to shed some light on relational engagements between organizations, adding to the dimensions discussed under the meso-level heading. However, the implications beyond the individual and organizational levels, and possible trickle effects to macro impacts has not received attention. Most often, partnerships did not really aim to address global problems or target individuals or communities in developing countries.

In addition to employees per se, the possible trickle effects from employees to consumers has been the subject of investigation in a few experimental studies (Vock 2011; Vock *et al.* forthcoming). They identified situations in which employee participation in partnerships was perceived positively by consumers, and was accompanied by higher degrees of trust in the company in question, or to increased intentions to buy from the company or recommend it to others. Aspects that turned out to play a role were consumers' perceived self-interest, their personality traits (more pro-social or individualistically-oriented) and the degree of fit between the NGO and the company, with high-fit partnerships exposing the largest effects (though not always necessarily in a positive way for the company). Here as well, however, linkages to other levels, let alone impact on the macro level have remained unexplored. Overall, this can be explained from the fact that the micro level has mostly been studied in areas such as HRM, organizational and consumer behaviour.

These initial findings thus deserve follow-up investigation to obtain more insight into the micro-interactions and whether and how they influence the overall impact of partnerships, taking the different levels into account. This also applies to more exact diffusion mechanisms between employees, their managers and colleagues within organizations, to what extent they spread the word about partnerships to families, friends, acquaintances and customers, if applicable, and whether they relate to individuals or communities targeted by the collaborative efforts. Impact on the ground in developing countries might be furthered by home-host individual interactions. More knowledge about the role of individuals will also be helpful for practitioners involved in partnerships. It seems not so easy to establish the impact of micro-level interactions, however, as they typically involve rather intangible, perception-based aspects. There is a parallel here with some developing-country settings in which informal rather than contractual relations predominate.

## BEYOND 'CROSS-SECTOR' PARTNERSHIPS? ON LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBLE TRENDS

In 2007, Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist coined the term 'post-partnerships' to indicate a corporate move away from business-NGO partnerships out of frustration with inefficient and unproductive collaboration, also due to conflicts between NGOs. This was based on a case study of the Business Social Compliance Initiative, and while noting the development, the authors warned for possible loss of legitimacy if business would again, like in the pre-partnership period, undertake activities without stakeholder involvement or strict inclusion of internationally accepted standards. Disappointment about multi-stakeholder initiatives has also been expressed by NGOs. Fransen and Kolk (2007) examined 50 standard-setting partnerships and found that some multistakeholder initiatives were characterized by 'narrow inclusiveness', with mere consultation instead of real involvement, and concomitant limitations in terms of membership, governance and implementation processes. This resembles concerns about transparency and accountability as mentioned for international partnerships for sustainable development. Partnerships may face tradeoffs between broad stakeholder involvement and rapid implementation. It has also been noted, in the context of input versus output legitimacy, that different partnerships on a specific issue might balance each other out if one would have relatively even representation (e.g. through more NGO involvement) while another focused more on effectiveness (through more business influence) (Dellas 2012).

As such, the article by Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist (2007) forms an isolated example that looks at a possible move 'beyond partnerships' from a business perspective. Interestingly, if we look at implementation of corporate responsibility initiatives, it turns out that in international supply chains, activities that sometimes started as partnerships, or that used the partnership mechanism as a vehicle for implementation, in reality often seem to be mere business-business collaborations, with NGOs at best in a service-delivery role, rather than a cross-sector cooperation. This may occur in other so-called partnerships as well if governments act as donors, NGOs do the implementation (in a market segment where consultants are similarly active), with business as leading actor. It should be noted that the labeling, and thus the assessment of the 'true' nature of the partnerships and the roles of the respective partners, may be a matter of interpretation and perception. Whether this is thus a trend beyond current case-based observations and anecdotal evidence is something that deserves further in-depth investigation.

At the same time, it points at a phenomenon that can be observed in practice. Once companies see the rationale for activities for the social good and if these are close to their core business, they are likely to seek what they perceive as the best and most efficient route to implementation. External funding or support in removing administrative and/or political barriers from governments will be welcomed, and NGO involvement as well if needed. However, the fact that some NGOs increasingly adopt mixed activities accompanied by hybrid income types, a tendency sometimes provoked by diminishing public funding (e.g. declining development assistance), means that their precise role and focus becomes more difficult to assess for outsiders. There are cases in which NGOs act as (semi-)consultants, are involved in trading activities, set up cooperatives, or undertake standard-setting and standard-promoting activities while serving as (partial) auditors of certifiers as well. This might raise questions about their independence, representativeness, legitimacy, 'ideological' positioning and key 'competences' when engaging in consultancy/advice type of work that 'commercial' parties do as well. At the same time, partnerships carried out in the framework of the UN (Millennium Development Goals) are merely government-driven, with very limited

business and NGO involvement, thus resembling official development assistance under a different heading.

These observations do not serve to negate the many cases in which partnerships are real and valuable cross-sector interactions, accompanied by learning and effective collaboration for a social good. However, they point at the diffusion of forms as well as the confusion that can be seen to emerge at times, and which is also noted by some practitioners, although not discussed very openly and widely. It may indicate a future trend beyond partnerships in certain instances, or a shake-up of particular actors and collaborative patterns. This may be a 'natural' evolution for some issues/countries/actors for which partnerships were very useful to help set the stage, bring parties together and clarify roles for further implementation. The need for more insight and precision in terminology and concepts may also be illustrated by the continued existence of 'hollow' partnerships, that do not have more than a name and some formalities (such as a list of participants and a website) in place but no (longer) real activities.

## CONCLUSION

What might be concluded is that we have moved beyond the stage of broad assertions about partnerships (as 'hype' or 'myth' on the one hand; as 'panacea' or 'the solution to complex global issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century', on the other). It seems important to recognize the wide variety and the complexities as outlined in this chapter. Given all the insights obtained over the years, there is a need to fine tune further efforts, and assess when and under which conditions which types of partnership do and do not work, and in which cases other mechanisms may be more effective. This chapter has shown that there is a clear set of partnership phenomena that deserves more research attention, based on real-life experiences, so as to also inform the practice of cross-section collaboration to help address global social problems. The current 'state of the art' appears to be somewhat fragmented, as different bodies of literature have tended to focus on distinct levels. Combined forces could help to establish a wider view on the impact of partnerships, including the dynamic interactions between and within the different levels, as shown in Figure 3 that outlined several trickle effects.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Implicit in the 'cross-sector' label is the notion that there are three 'sectors' in society (the state, the market and civil society), which has been subject to controversy. Especially the idea that civil society forms a separate or 'third' sector or system (Nerfin 1987), has been debated, in the fields of international relations and development studies in particular (cf. Fowler and Biekart 2011; Kolk, 1996; Mitlin *et al.* 2007). Interestingly, while the notion appeared to have fallen into disuse there, or at least been explicitly recognized for having serious limitations that hamper its further adoption, it has re-emerged in a seemingly rather uncontested manner in critical management studies and a more applied economics stream from a different origin, i.e. related to the US and the UK contexts, most recently (Hull *et al.* 2011; Salamon 2010). While acknowledging the limitations of the 'sector' notion, this chapter does not address this debate in detail as such, although the section on context and actors pays some attention to it. It occasionally includes the cross-sector label, however, as this has made some headway to indicate collaboration between different parties and groups in society, and thus seems to fall under the type of analysis for which "a three-sector story is still useful"



(Biekart and Fowler 2012: 182), at least to some extent.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that particularly in the fields of political science, public policy and (international) governance, 'private' is often used in the sense of 'non-state', thus encompassing both business and NGOs, see e.g. Bäckstrand (2008); Liese and Beisheim (2011); Pattberg *et al.* (2012); Schäferhoff *et al.* (2009). Public-private partnerships are then usually seen as 'hybrid' forms of governance as opposed to those that are purely governmental or private. In that context, private consists of business-to-business or NGO, separately or mixed; this is often left unspecified as the focus of debate is elsewhere (i.e. state versus non-state). In the international relations and governance literatures, much attention has been paid to transnational partnerships (usually using the same public versus private dichotomy), building on the long-standing concept of transnational relations: cross-boundary interactions involving at least one non-state actor (see e.g. Andanova *et al.* (2009); Bäckstrand (2008); Schäferhoff *et al.* (2009)). In line with the common terminology in business and management, and to maintain as much conceptual clarity as possible, this chapter clearly distinguishes private (as business) from nonprofit (NGO).

<sup>3</sup> As explained in note 2 already, here as well 'private' is meant to include both business and civil society representation.

<sup>4</sup> Institutional voids have been defined with a focus on the formal aspects as "the absence of specialized intermediaries, regulatory systems, and contract-enforcing mechanisms" (Khanna and Palepu 2005: 62). It should be noted, however, that such 'voids' are not 'empty' of institutions, as different types of (informal) rules and arrangements may be in place in specific locations, although insufficient to enable the overall proper functioning and development of markets. In that sense, the term 'institutional gaps' might better indicate the varying degrees to which institutions may be present or missing in developing countries. Especially for the latter category, failed or fragile states, or areas of limited statehood have also been used, although terms are not always defined very precisely.

<sup>5</sup> This is part of a broader research project on the role of business in (post-)conflict countries in Central Africa, carried out with François Lenfant. While the paper on coffee partnerships is still in progress at the time of finalization of this chapter, other publications on partnerships in these same contexts are available (Kolk and Lenfant 2012a, 2012b).

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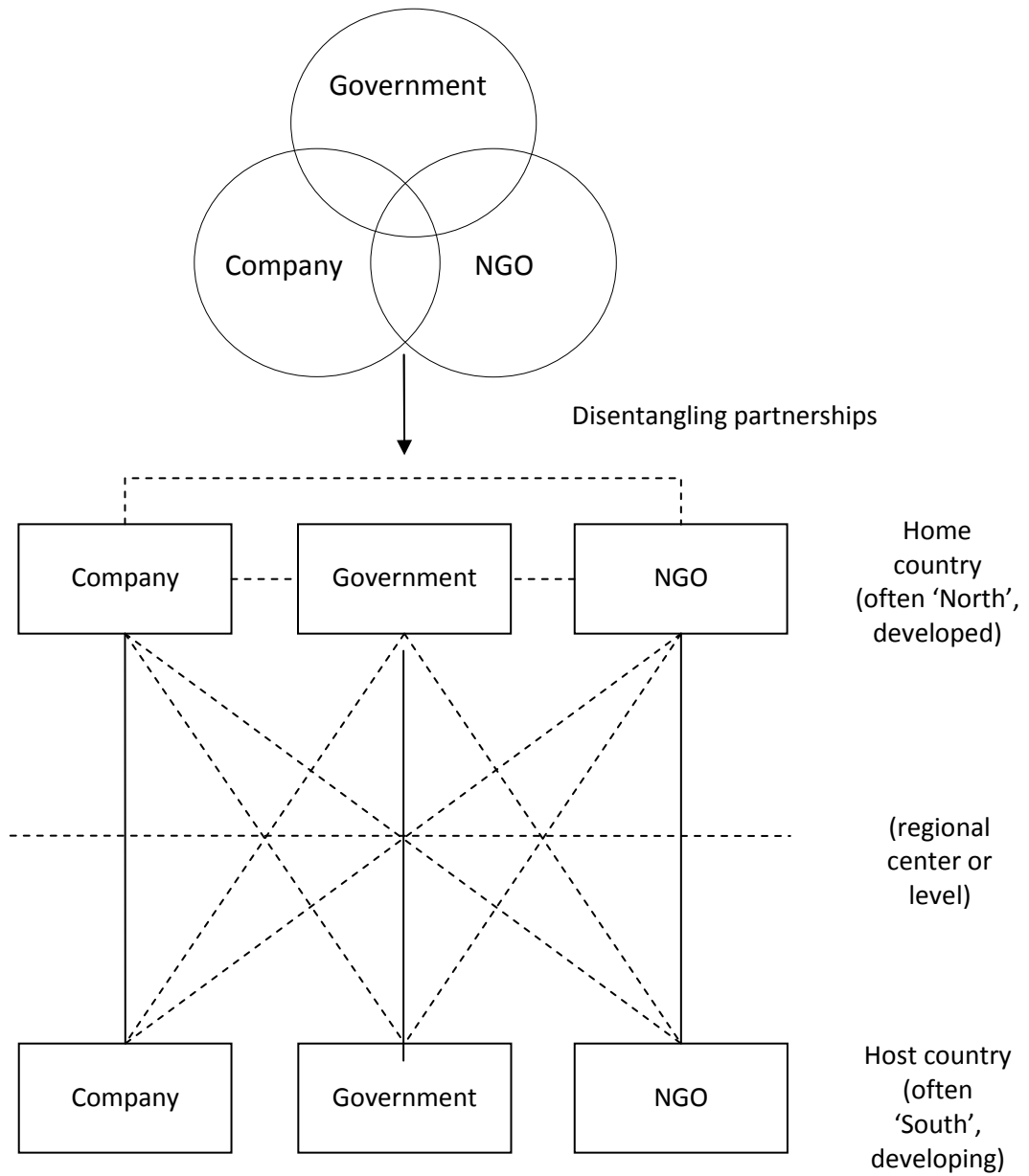
## FIGURES AND TABLES

**Table 1.** Examples of partnerships' functions, types, motivations

<p><b>1A. Functions of partnerships for sustainable development (as registered at the United Nations)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Production of knowledge, information, innovation</li> <li>▪ Dissemination of knowledge and good practices</li> <li>▪ Technical implementation</li> <li>▪ Institutional capacity building</li> <li>▪ Norm and standard setting, and certification</li> <li>▪ Campaigning for public awareness and education</li> <li>▪ Lobby and advocacy</li> <li>▪ Technology transfer</li> <li>▪ Participatory management and community involvement in policy programs</li> <li>▪ Training of employees or other actors</li> <li>▪ Planning at national or regional levels</li> </ul>
<p><b>1B. Types of international partnerships for sustainable development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Knowledge partnerships</i>: generate, pool and transfer expertise, best practices and formulate proposals</li> <li>▪ <i>Standard-setting partnerships</i>: drawing up voluntary rules in areas where there are none, sometimes also involving certification of the (new) standards</li> <li>▪ <i>Service partnerships</i>: focus on initiating and realizing project to implement development goals, thus filling operational gaps, and distributing resources and services</li> </ul>
<p><b>1C. Types of partnerships in which companies and NGOs are most often involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>'Social investment'</i> type partnerships: providing/receiving support via donations of cash, products, gifts in kind, employee fundraising</li> <li>▪ <i>'Capacity building'</i> type partnerships: focused on empowerment, sustaining/bringing about behavioral change, via employee engagement, institution building</li> <li>▪ <i>'Business'</i> type partnerships: advisory services to improve business/organizational practices, social business development, social or commercial, alternative technology or product development</li> <li>▪ <i>'Marketing'</i> type partnerships: cause-related marketing, product licensing, sponsorship</li> <li>▪ <i>'Advocacy'</i> type partnerships: Issues-driven partnerships/campaigns, aimed at changing business practices or policy</li> <li>▪ <i>'Brokering'</i> type partnerships: Facilitating large-scale initiatives, bringing together a range of players, also at local levels, to e.g. match expertise or other contributions</li> </ul> <p><i>'Other'</i> partnerships: Initiatives that are highly innovative, unexpected and 'ahead of the evidence'</p>
<p><b>1D. Reasons for companies and NGOs to engage in partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gain access to knowledge, expertise, skills, networks, contacts</li> <li>▪ Gain access to funding</li> <li>▪ Improve/renew understanding of challenging issues and possible (innovative) solutions</li> <li>▪ Improve stakeholder relations</li> <li>▪ Improve reputation and credibility</li> <li>▪ Increase operational efficiencies</li> <li>▪ Create more appropriate services and products (for-profit or not-for-profit)</li> <li>▪ Gain access to and/or knowledge of new (future) markets</li> <li>▪ Gain access to and more insight into business operations, current markets and supply chains</li> <li>▪ Increase leverage/impact</li> <li>▪ Increase motivation of and attractiveness to (new) staff members and/or volunteers</li> <li>▪ improve risk management</li> </ul>

*Sources:* Compiled from Pattberg *et al.* (2012: 9) (1A); Beisheim (2012) (1B); C&E (2010, 2011); Tennyson and Harrison (2008) (1C); plus, for 1D, other sources such as Elkington and Fennell (1998); Rondinelli and London (2003).

**Figure 1.** Distentangling actor categories in partnerships for global problems

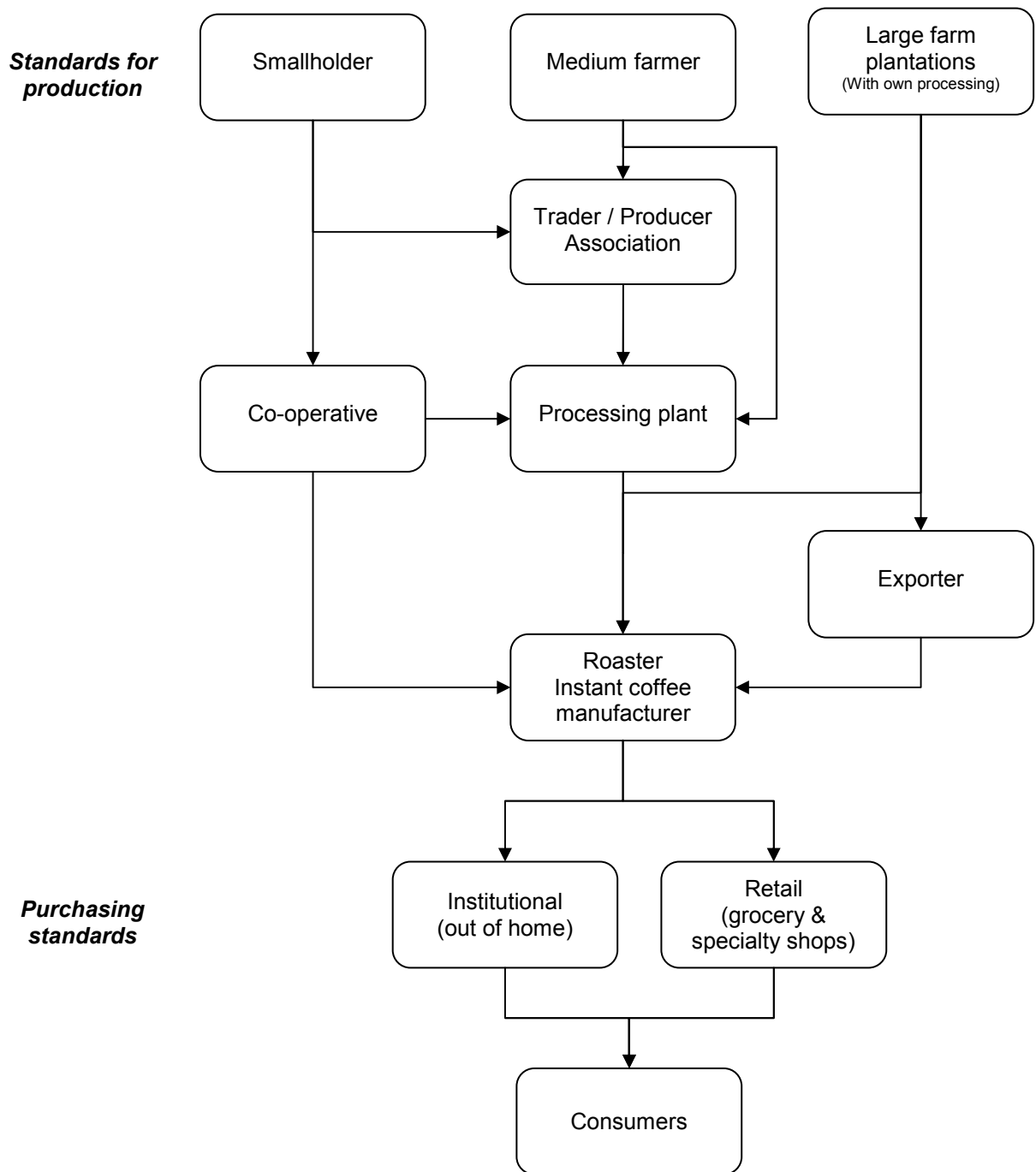




**Table 2.** Some peculiarities of actors relevant to an international-to-local (development) perspective

<b>Companies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ headquarters; via specific (e.g. CSR) department; can also go through geographical or functional (business) units; or ('separate') corporate foundation</li> <li>▪ perhaps via intermediary regional organization to local subsidiaries (fully integrated, partially owned, 'independent', with different degrees of "arms' length"); or directly, more 'independently' from a corporate foundation to local activities/partners</li> <li>▪ also depends on type of activities, local production and/or sales units in host countries or, in case of commodity-based business more indirect relationship via e.g. buying from traders/exporters</li> </ul>
<b>Governments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'headquarters' in specific country, particularly notable in case of development assistance, which can be a nested structure with a development agency based in ministry of foreign affairs or dedicated ministry; may also involve one or more inter-governmental organizations</li> <li>▪ Usually no regional intermediation, but local presence through embassies or specific dedicated units/officers; regional intergovernmental organizations can be involved</li> <li>▪ In addition to donor government also possibility for local (host-country) government representation or involvement; can be at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ national level (national government, specific ministry or agency)</li> <li>○ sub-national/local level (depending on size and governance structure): representatives of national government (agencies) or local government bodies (sub-states/provinces, villages)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>NGOs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'headquarters' in specific country, can be part of larger international NGO</li> <li>▪ perhaps via intermediary regional organization to local 'subsidiaries' (fully integrated, partially owned, 'independent', with different degrees of "arms' length"); or directly, more 'independently', directly from the home country to local activities/partners</li> <li>▪ In addition to 'donor' NGO also possibility for local (host-country) NGO representation or involvement; can be at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ national level (national NGO), with or without (ownership/network) relationship to home-country NGO</li> <li>○ regional or local level (depending on size and governance structure); host-country NGOs with or without (ownership/network) relationship to national or home-country NGO</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ also depends on NGOs' types of activities (e.g. advocacy, promotion of transparency, service delivery, assistance in implementation; and whether services are delivered for 'profit'/income generation)</li> </ul>

Figure 2. An overview of the coffee supply chain from bean to cup



Source: Kolk (2011).

**Table 3.** Aspects/questions to consider in decision-making on collaboration

<p><b>Six questions on strategic criteria for collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can both parties identify specific projects for collaboration and the required internal resources? (with no leading to a no-collaboration approach, and an end of the questions to be answered)</li> <li>▪ Have the parties formulated criteria for partner selection? (with no leading to an arm’s length, relatively loose, relationship)</li> <li>▪ Are both parties willing and able to develop mutually accepted procedures for collaboration? (with no again leading to an arm’s length relationship)</li> <li>▪ Can both parties define problems clearly and explore feasible and measurable solutions? (with no leading to interactive collaboration, a less intensive form)</li> <li>▪ Is the partnership team willing to focus on manageable tasks that can be implemented quickly? (with no again leading to interactive collaboration)</li> <li>▪ Can both parties maintain confidentiality? (with no again leading to interactive collaboration, and yes to an intensive partnership)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Two additional questions related to the implementation process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the partnership implementation accountable? (considering accountability mechanisms in the various partnership phases, and the relevant stakeholders)</li> <li>▪ Is the partnership institutionalized within the organization? (reckoning with ways in which ‘crises’ in the relationship have been handled, and carrying out an informal audit amongst partnership team members and other staff)</li> </ul> <p>Depending on the outcomes of the review, improvements need to be made or an exit strategy followed.</p>

Source: Compiled from Rondinelli and London (2003) (upper half); Seitanidi and Crane (2009) (bottom half).

**Table 4.** Predictable problems in partnerships and ways to avoid/reduce them

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Misunderstandings</i>: range from misunderstandings about context of partnerships to misunderstandings of each other’s objectives (due to lack of familiarity, misconceptions or unrealistic objectives)</li> <li>▪ <i>Misallocation of costs and benefits</i>: perceptions of unfair distribution of costs and benefits vis-à-vis other partner (overexploitation of one’s own resources, too much risk in relation to value added compared to other partner, overuse for corporate PR, unreasonable demands, insufficient priority, dependence)</li> <li>▪ <i>Mismatches of power</i>: perceived or real imbalances, leading to (perceived) domination by one of the partner, too much intrusion in partner’s affairs, micromanagement, ownership and exclusivity issues</li> <li>▪ <i>Mismatched partners</i>: insufficient complementarity, lack of overlap in goals, cultures, markets, decision processes, structures, styles or constituencies</li> <li>▪ <i>Misfortunes of time</i>: due to the fact that novelty diminishes when partnerships last longer, requiring continued commitment and sufficient renewal where necessary, and replacement of key partnership team members if they leave; lack of preparedness for turnover and of an exit strategy</li> <li>▪ <i>Mistrust</i>: can result from the conglomerate of other ‘mis-es’, and give rise to covert behavior, opportunism, and communication problems</li> </ul>
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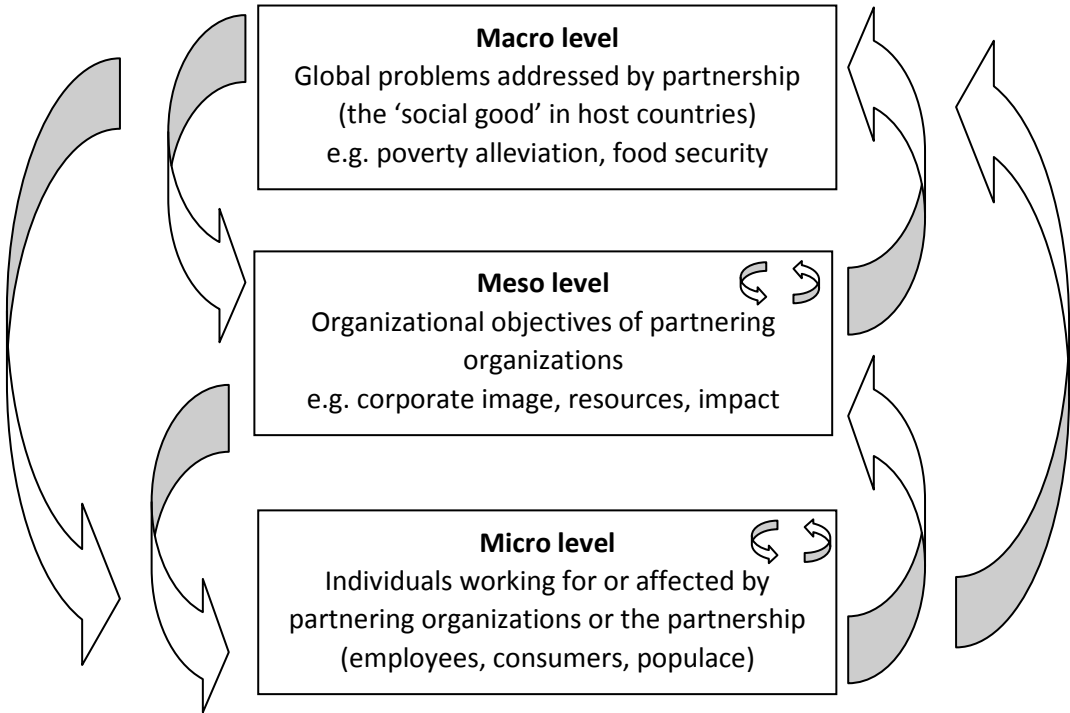
Source: Compiled from Berger *et al.* (2004)

**Table 5.** Possible ways to reduce/address predictable problems in partnerships

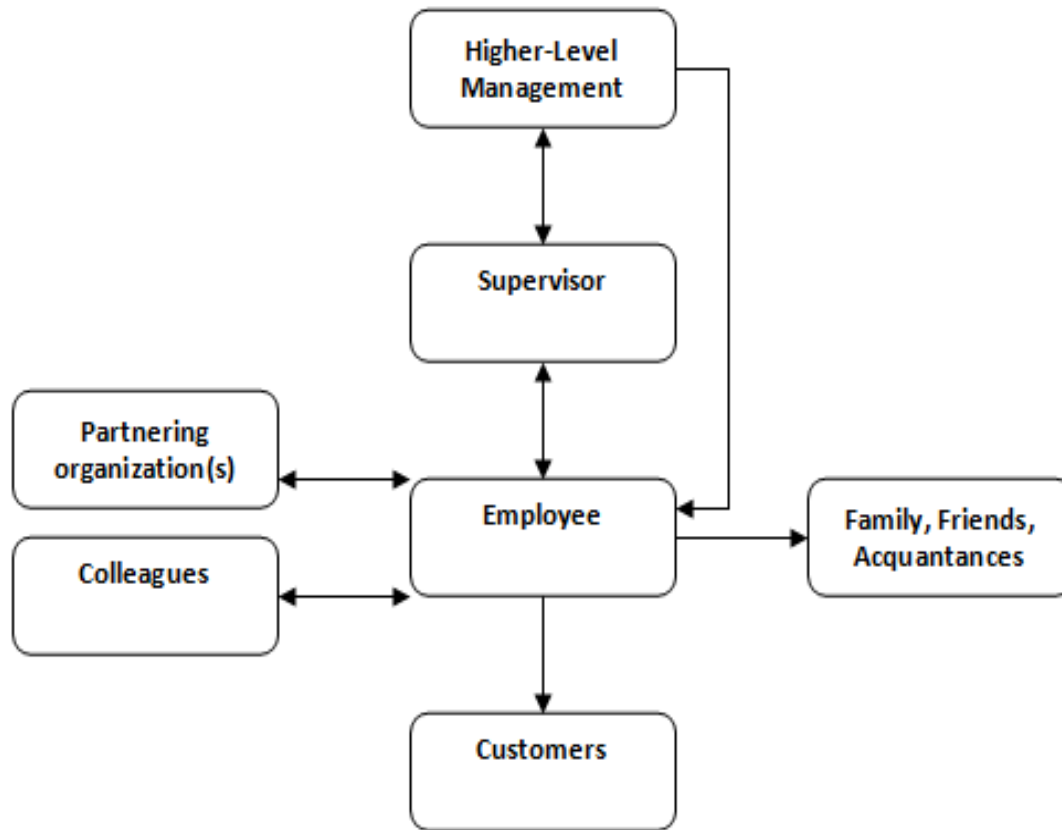
<p><b>Ensuring fit on multiple dimensions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Mission fit</i>: creates attention, priority, share of mind</li> <li>▪ <i>Resource fit</i>: help to gain control of critical assets, skills or resources possessed by the partner</li> <li>▪ <i>Management fit</i>: involves compatibility on personal level between leaders, creates engagement, support and commitment</li> <li>▪ <i>Evaluation fit</i>: shared perceptions of success</li> <li>▪ <i>Work force fit</i>: enhances organizational identification (which may result in job satisfaction, organizational commitment and higher retention) and greater likelihood of volunteer work</li> <li>▪ <i>Target market fit</i>: demographic, geographic and/or psychographic fit in target markets may lead to differential advantage when customers have affinity for the cause, leading to more support for the NGO and activities on behalf of the cause</li> <li>▪ <i>Product/cause fit</i>: creates value through co-branding or based on strategic similarity</li> <li>▪ <i>Cultural fit</i>: if organizational cultures match, then this eases implementation and management</li> <li>▪ <i>Cycle fit</i>: comparable planning cycles lead to congruence of timing and seasonal complementarity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Careful consideration of structural characteristics of the possible NGO partner</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Programmatic versus grant-making</i> NGO</li> <li>▪ <i>Autonomy versus central control</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Large, well-established versus small, entrepreneurial</i> NGO</li> <li>▪ <i>Revenue-generating products/services versus none</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Inherent cross-sector collaboration versus 'traditional'</i> NGO</li> </ul>
<p><b>Careful consideration of structural characteristics of the possible corporate partner</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Flat versus hierarchical</i> company</li> <li>▪ <i>Broad consumer market versus specific target market</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Direct sales force/retail presence versus business to business</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Pre-eminent brand versus less eminent brand</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Careful consideration of structural characteristics of the possible partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Brand-level versus company-level</i> partnership</li> <li>▪ <i>Dedicated partnership manager versus none</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Dedicated partnership marketing budget versus none</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Fixed donation versus variable donation</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Few marketing initiatives versus many marketing initiatives</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Venues for grassroots engagement of company employees and customers versus none</i></li> </ul>

Source: Compiled from Berger *et al.* (2004)

**Figure 3.** Trickle effects of partnerships and the various levels



**Figure 4.** Micro-level interactions in the context of partnering organizations



Source: Adapted from Kolk *et al.* (2010)