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What Makes Cross-Sector Partnerships Successful?

A comparative Case Study Analysis of Diverse Partnership Types in an Emerging Economy Context

By

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to identify leadership success factors of cross-sector partnerships. We start with an overview of relevant scholarly and practice-oriented work, and motivate our research with reference to the need to add nuance to existing constructs, to explicitly consider the implications of different partnership types, and to assess the role of socio-economic and other contextual factors in an emerging economy. Our methodology focuses on ten comparative case studies, premised on two intermediate steps to develop a typology and evaluative criteria for partnerships. Our findings confirm the importance of and add detail to the success factors identified in the literature, and they suggest that these factors are not independent of each other but feed into each other in either a mutually reinforcing or constraining manner. They also highlight the important role of the local and national socio-economic context. In addition, three themes emerge from the case studies that contain some novel contributions to the literature. First, the case studies emphasise the role of social capital in creating informal accountability mechanisms. Second, they highlight the kind of leadership and organisational culture that is conducive to interest based negotiation, with an emphasis on the explicit embrace of tensions or conflict as a catalytic force. Finally, the case studies suggest that 'dialogue' and 'implementation' are important elements of all collaboration initiatives and that these elements are associated with different organisational logics that require corresponding leadership responses.

1. PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS FACTORS IN THE LITERATURE

Cross-sector partnerships involve some form of structured collaboration between organisations from business, government and civil society on the basis of converging interests, focused on achieving joint objectives. Partnerships exist on different scales and take different forms, but they have in common the expectation that the participants can achieve their objectives more effectively and efficiently through strategic alliances with others rather than acting independently. This 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham and Vangen, 2000) is attained by pooling complementary resources and sharing risks and rewards in the joint undertaking (Warner and Sullivan, 2004). Though of course cross-sector partnerships have a long history (Hodge and Greve, 2007), they have become increasingly popular in areas of policy-making and implementation that were previously the primary domain of the state, such as infrastructure, health, education and natural resource management, and their prominence is also spreading geographically from developed to emerging economies.

Over and above the incentives faced by particular organisations to participate, the proliferation of partnerships can be interpreted as part of a broader shift in governance, or the process of giving 'direction to society' (Rhodes, 1997) through the interplay between government, business and civil society. Indeed, partnerships are sometimes seen as a new model of governance, variously referred to as 'new', 'collaborative' or 'network' governance, among other terms (Moon, 2002; Donahue, 2004; Ruggie, 2002). Furthermore, it has been argued that partnerships are being established as a response to gaps or deficits in traditional governance models, especially with regard to the limited – and some argue declining – ability of states to devise and implement rules or to provide public goods in the increasingly global and complex interactions between social, economic and environmental systems (Benner et al, 2004).

The partnership phenomenon is not without controversy, with opposing commentators highlighting either the potential public interest benefits (e.g. Zadek and Radovich, 2005) or risks (e.g. Martens, 2007; see also a recent special issue of *Journal of Business Ethics*). In addition to these policy concerns regarding their broader impact, partnerships often confront significant managerial and leadership challenges in fulfilling their potential (e.g. Vangen and Huxham, 2003). This is despite numerous efforts to provide 'best practice' guidelines or frameworks for partnerships, both in the scholarly literature and in policy circles. In the UK government of Tony Blair, for instance, it was stated, 'There is a sufficiently robust body of

research to enable the success criteria for effective partnerships to be identified' (UK Department of Health, quoted in Hudson and Hardy, 2002: 52). These criteria were distilled into six principles in a 'Partnership Assessment Tool', which is meant to provide guidance for partnership development, as well as a diagnostic framework. The principles emphasise requirements related to 1) recognising and accepting the need for partnership; 2) developing clarity and realism of purpose; 3) ensuring commitment and ownership; 4) developing and maintaining trust; 5) creating clear and robust partnership arrangements; and 6) monitoring, measuring and learning (Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Hardy, Hudson and Waddington, 2003).

Most of these principles converge with or complement those of other, similar initiatives or frameworks, such as that developed by Business Partners for Development (BPD, 2002). With direct relevance to the first three principles mentioned above, BPD (2002: 3) emphasises the need to identify and build upon the partnering organisations' 'core complementary competencies': 'As a general rule, the closer participants' activities and benefits [in the partnership] align with their core activities, the more likely the partnership's overall chance of success'.

Many analyses (e.g. Waddock, 1989, BPD, 2002; Seitanidi and Crane, forthcoming; Wohlstetter et al, 2005) propose an evolutionary or life-cycle approach to partnerships, suggesting that successive stages entail different requirements of effort and corresponding skill set. During early stages, a vital role is played by champions within partnering organisations in identifying the potential and purpose of the partnership and in building concomitant support from their organisations´ leadership (BPD, 2002; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2000). In subsequent phases, it is argued, 'significant time needs to be allocated to building mutual respect and consensus' (BPD, 2002: 23). Furthermore, the partners ought to negotiate and agree on governance structures, including decision-making processes, and formalising such agreements in a memorandum of understanding is likely to make it is easier to resolve difficulties or to ´scale up´ the partnership's activities (op cit.).

Negotiating and reaching agreement on the partnership objectives and governance structures may require the contributions of a skilled facilitator, who is able to help participants identify and build upon converging interests even if there are other areas of potential conflict (Fisher and Ury, 1981). In many instances, the day to day implementation of the partnership often involves a dedicated partnership manager or coordinator. Vangen and Huxham (2003) suggest that such partnership managers have to balance their facilitative roles including the

enrolment, encouragement and empowerment of members, on one hand, with more directive or even manipulative activities focused on moving the initiative forward, on the other.

A key theme in most contributions is the need to build and maintain trust between participants in a partnership, also because partners will need to take risks when relying on other partners fulfilling their part of explicit agreements or implicit expectations. Vangen and Huxham (2003: 11) argue that building and maintaining trust is a cyclical process: 'Each time an outcome meets expectations, trusting attitudes are reinforced… increasing the chance that partners will have positive expectations about joint actions in the future'. The trust-building loop hence ought to be initiated by aiming for realistic and initially modest outcomes, and this is also in line with recurring calls for partnerships to aim for 'small' or 'quick' wins (op cit; Hudson and Hardy, 2002).

Vangen and Huxham (2003) and others emphasise the need for transparent communication and managing power imbalances as important for building and maintaining trust. With regard to power, many critiques of cross-sector partnerships have focused on inherent power differentials between business and civil society, in particular, and the problematic assumption that these groups have shared objectives (Hamann and Acutt, 2003). In response, Covey and Brown (2001: 14) propose the term 'critical cooperation' to argue that 'the possibilities of productive engagement between civil society and business are greatly expanded as we learn more about how to manage not just cooperation *or* conflict, but cooperation *and* conflict in the same relationship' (original emphasis).

Leaning in particular on the work of Fisher and Ury (1981), they identify four conditions for successful partnership. The first is 'balancing power asymmetries' based on the recognition that each of the parties have an influence on each other's well-being. Crucially, 'the parties do not have to be equal in power – but they do have to recognize each other as capable of imposing significant costs or providing valuable benefits' (Covey and Brown, 2001: 7). The second condition is 'acknowledging critical rights', which include legal and normative frameworks, as well as procedural structures within the partnership. Thirdly, participants need to negotiate both converging and conflicting interests, because the former are vital to identify 'options for mutual gain' and the latter enable the effective management of conflict. Fourthly, participants will need to manage relations with their stakeholder constituencies, especially if the partnership enjoys disparate levels of support among these constituencies.

Finally, a recurring set of themes is related to adaptation and learning. One of the strengths of partnerships is meant to be their flexibility and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, so the governance structures and processes of a successful partnership will need to support this flexibility, with an important role for monitoring and evaluation (BPD, 2002; Hudson and Hardy, 2002). Furthermore, given that partnering organisations are frequently not accustomed to working together, it is argued that special measures need to be put in place to help partners build capacity to, for instance, 'understand the different work styles, cultures, and time frames of the other partners' (BPD, 2002: 25). Learning is thus not only an important impact of successful partnership (e.g. Ruggie, 2002), but also a crucial input or antecedent. The ability of partnership organisations to institutionalise learning has been shown to be a key success factor also in business alliances (Doz, 1996).

Motivation for this research

Based on this overview, it is apparent that there is a significant amount of analysis and guidance on how partnerships ought to be implemented, and much of this is convergent or complementary. Yet a number of questions remain, especially with regard to some of the managerial and leadership implications of implementing some of the broad prescriptions mentioned above, such as the need for building trust in the context of both converging and conflicting interests. In this vein, Huxham and Vangen's (2000) research on the role of leadership in partnerships provides important points of departure, because this encompasses many of the design and management aspects that contribute either to partnership success or failure considered above. In particular, they argue that leadership is mediated by partnership structures, processes and participants, and leadership activities include 'managing power and controlling the agenda'; 'representing and mobilizing member organizations'; and 'enthusing and empowering those who can deliver collaborative aims' (op cit.: 1169-1170).

A second motivation for this research has been the fact that many of the existing efforts to identify success factors in cross-sector partnerships have adopted a fairly vague definition of partnerships (indeed this problem of definition was highlighted by Gray and Wood, 1991). More particularly, despite a number of efforts to establish typologies of partnerships (e.g. Zadek and Radovich, 2005), most attempts to identify design or management success factors have considered different kinds of partnerships without explicitly discussing the implications of these differences. It is therefore unclear whether, for instance, partnerships in different

sectors, such as health or natural resource management, or partnerships with more or less tangible objectives share the same suite of success factors.

Finally, most of the existing analyses focused on design or management aspects have been of partnerships in developed economies with consolidated states. This is despite the argument mentioned above, according to which the international spread of partnerships is driven in part by the limited capacity of the state especially in developing or emerging economies to fulfil its governance responsibilities. Furthermore, the context in such countries may well give rise to a different set of success factors than those identified in developed economies. This research thus investigates partnerships in South Africa in order to consider whether particular success factors can be identified in emerging economy contexts.

2. METHODOLOGY

The overarching aim of the research reported on in this paper is to investigate the leadership factors that contribute to success or failure of different kinds of partnership, ranging from formal public-private partnerships (PPPs) to more informal arrangements, in an emerging economy context. Our primary method was comparative case study analysis of ten partnerships in South Africa. However, two intermediate objectives needed to be responded to prior to the empirical investigation. First, we developed a typology of cross-sector partnerships that could be used to better differentiate between different kinds of initiatives. Second, we developed a set of evaluative criteria for the assessment of cross-sector partnerships, based on existing literature. Contrary to the approach taken by Hudson and Hardy (2002), in which particular principles are suggested as criteria for success *and* contributors to success, we argue that it is important to consider how we can identify dimensions of success in a partnership in order to then consider what enabled this success, even if there may be some overlap between diagnostic and explanatory factors.

In line with these objectives, the research followed a deliberately sequential process. The broad research approach is akin to analytical induction, in which there is an iterative back-and-forth between existing theories in the literature and developing explanations on the basis of empirical evidence (Manning, 1982; for applications in management related fields, see Bansal and Roth, 2000; Wilson, 2004). This approach was chosen because, though there is an existing and rapidly growing amount of literature on cross-sector collaboration, we feel that there is nevertheless insufficient theoretical development to allow for a deductive hypothesis-

testing approach. Furthermore, we expect the institutional and environmental context to play a prominent role in the motives, mechanisms and success factors of partnerships (Gray and Wood, 1991; Lowndes, 2001; Dacin et al, 2002; Lubell et al, 2002; Selsky and Parker, 2005). This important role of the local and national context, and the relative paucity of empirical research on partnerships in emerging economy contexts, further warrants an inductive, empirically grounded methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

First, a literature review was conducted to identify existing evaluative criteria and typologies of cross-sector collaboration activities. This was complemented by about eight elite interviews; that is, interviews with particular persons who are identified and approached on the basis of their specialised experience, knowledge, and access to information – in this instance, about cross-sector collaboration in South Africa (see, for instance, Welch et al, 2002). The literature review and elite interviews gave rise to a preliminary model of what defines such initiatives and how they might be evaluated, as well as an initial understanding of the South African context for cross-sector collaboration. This model was used to identify a broad cross-section of such initiatives reported on in the southern African region, and these were briefly analysed on the basis of publicly available information, most of which was obtained from existing databases or web-pages on the World Wide Web. In addition, partnerships were identified through a media review (focused on the first half of 2008) and through the elite interviews mentioned above. These activities gave rise to a database profiling 75 collaboration initiatives with regard to the following basic information: the title, main participants, the initiative's purpose, primary implementation mechanisms and organisational structure. This information was evaluated qualitatively in order to refine the emerging typology of collaboration initiatives.

2.1 A typology of partnerships

An overview of existing efforts to develop a typology of partnerships (e.g. Benner *et al*., 2004; Martens, 2007; Zadek and Radovich, 2006; note that here we are not considering those typologies focused on the kind of organisations participating in partnerships – see Selsky and Parker, 2005; Lemos and Agrawal, 2006) led us to the conclusion that there are inherent limits to the usefulness of numerous, narrow partnership categories based on diverse criteria. We thus developed a simplified version based on syntheses of categories suggested by Martens (2007) and Zadek and Radovich (2006), based on two axes (for a similar two-pronged typology, see Benner *et al*., 2004). The first is the extent to which the purpose and
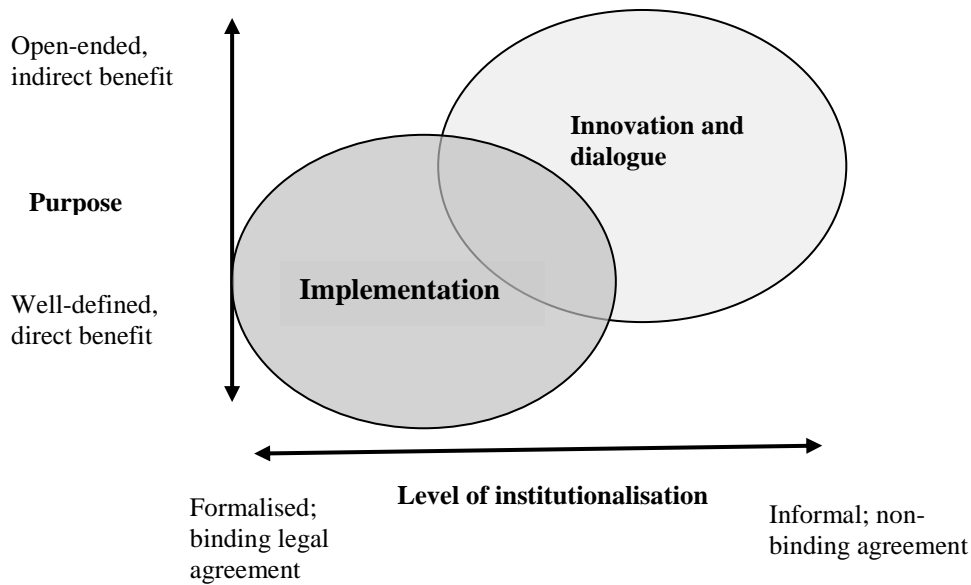
objectives of the partnership are clearly defined and measurable. The second is the extent to which the institutional structure of the partnership is formalised, ranging from a legal contract that imposes binding obligations on the participants, to more informal arrangements such as a memorandum of understanding or tacit agreements within social networks.

These axes give rise to a two-dimensional space in which we mapped the 75 cross-sector collaboration initiatives mentioned above. This exercise gave rise to two clusters, as indicated in Figure 1:

a) *Implementation partnerships*. These are predominantly about financing and managing action to achieve particular, tangible objectives. Because the objectives are well defined and because their achievement requires the leveraging and allocation of financial resources, these initiatives generally have a formal institutional structure, commonly involving a binding legal agreement. Contractual public-private partnerships (PPPs), many of which are focused on infrastructure delivery, are prominent among this cluster of initiatives.

b) *Innovation and dialogue partnerships*. These initiatives, on the other hand, are characterised by more intangible objectives and more informal institutional forms. They commonly seek to create a guiding or facilitative framework for action, rather than affecting action per se, and they often seek to respond to a governance gap, as mentioned above. Their purpose is open-ended and emergent, in that the outcome (and sometimes even the problem to be addressed) is not clearly defined at the outset. Because of this open-endedness, such initiatives are not very formal in terms of institutional structure, in part because they need to be flexible and in part because they have few clear objectives or financial commitments to which partners can be held accountable.

These clusters represent two idealised types – broad trends rather than definite categories. Some initiatives are likely to be explicitly or implicitly hybrid forms whose aim is both to establish rules or principles and to facilitate tangible action to support these (Zadek and Radovich, 2006). In many instances, however, our sample of 75 inititiaves suggests that it may be more accurate to speak of bifurcated partnership structures. For instance, a particular partnership may be most well known as a strategic negotiation forum with relatively informal institutionalisation, but it will hive off smaller, more focused and formalised initiatives to allow for local-level implementation. This bifurcated nature of partnership organisational structures is discussed in more detail with regard to the detailed case studies below.

Figure 1: Schematic illustration of the idealised partnership types

Open-ended,
indirect benefit

Purpose

**Innovation and
dialogue**

Implementation

Well-defined,
direct benefit

Formalised;
binding legal
agreement

Level of institutionalisation

Informal; non-
binding agreement

2.2 Evaluating partnerships

With regard to evaluative criteria – that is, our second intermediate obejctive – we identify two overarching, interrelated criteria for evaluating partnerships: effectiveness and accountability. Effectiveness is an instrumental measure for assessing whether partnerships achieve what they are established to achieve, and whether they do so in a cost-effective manner. It takes into consideration the opportunity costs – that is, it compares the effectiveness of a partnership with the effectiveness of achieving its objectives by alternative means, if indeed there are any – as well as possible ancillary or unintended consequences. In this regard, there is a significant body of literature on development impact evaluation that can be drawn on (for an application in the context of partnerships, see Rieth et al, 2007).

Accountability is a political and procedural measure for ensuring that partnerships are fair, inclusive and legitimate. From a normative perspective, partnerships need to be accountable to those affected by them, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. At the same time, it has been argued that accountability is an instrumental requirement for effectiveness. For instance, Zadek and Radovich (2006: 4) suggest: 'Improved governance and accountability of partnerships enhances performance, and governance aligned to accountability to those impacted by partnerships will enhance development outcomes.' Furthermore, effectiveness and accountability are directly linked because if a partnership initiative demonstrates that it is effectively solving the problems it set out to solve, then this is 'accountability for outcomes'

(Benner et al, 2004: 204). Of more particular interest in this research, however, are what Benner *et al*. (2004) define as the accountability of the *actors* involved in a partnership and the accountability of the partnership *process*, with an overarching need for transparency. For instance, 'the selection process [to identify partnership members] needs to be transparent and individual actors need to live up to high standards of transparency' (op cit: 203). Such accountability issues were considered in our research both as evaluative criteria and possible success factors.

It should be noted that scholarly articles discussing evaluative criteria for partnerships commonly focus on either one of the partnership types identified in Figure 1. For instance, Hodge and Greve (2002) provide an overview of the extensive literature on PPPs, while Benner et al (2004), Hale and Mauzerall (2004), Martens (2007), Rein et al. (2005) and Stewart and Gray (2006) focus on more informal collaboration initiatives. However, despite these different empirical or theoretical emphases, the overarching identification of effectiveness and accountability represents a convergence in the literature. Furthermore, our brief analysis of the 75 southern African partnership initiatives also suggests that this evaluative framework is pertinent across the spectrum of partnership types.

2.3 The empirical analysis

The next step was to identify ten case studies for more detailed comparative case analysis, based on methodological parameters recommended by Eisenhardt (1989).
Comparative case studies are an effective means for context-specific and detailed analysis of the inter-relationships between various variables, and they are suitable for developing theoretical propositions. The sampling of these case studies was informed by the literature review, the database of initiatives, and the elite interviews, with one of the guiding objectives being the inclusion of partnerships across the spectrum of types identified in our typology. A further objective was the inclusion of initiatives in diverse thematic areas, including infrastructure development, urban rejuvenation, welfare and natural resource management.

In terms of data generation, each of the case studies is based primarily on document research and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were facilitated by means of a protocol to ensure some level of consistency between interviews, but at the same time the questions and the interviewing style adopted a narrative approach to allow the generation of in-depth, context-specific information (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Kvale, 1996). The protocol included

questions related to the motivation, purpose and design of the partnership; perceived effectiveness and accountability of the partnership; and perceived success factors, challenges and constraints. In some of the case studies, focus groups were also facilitated along similar lines.

Within the case studies, interviewees were chosen by identifying a suitable, ideally senior representative of each of the key participating groups in the initiative. The emphasis was on obtaining the perspectives of partnering organisations from business, government, and civil society. This was important in order to facilitate the triangulation of research findings and to ensure that pertinent perspectives are identified. Furthermore, particular attention was given to identifying possible dissenting perspectives.

The process of transforming interviews or other data generation events into, first, transcripts and data notes; second, synthesising working papers and specific case study analysis reports; and finally, a full research report and subsequent publications was characterised by a perpetual process of synthesising and thematic coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Efforts to enhance the validity of these emerging arguments included respondent validation on the basis of a feedback meeting involving interviewees and others, other communication with interviewees (often via email), and parallel data analysis and interpretation by different members of the research team (Flick, 2002).

3   OVERVIEW OF THE CASE STUDIES

It is apparent that space constraints allow only a very cursory overview of the case studies, with a focus on those factors of success or failure that were emphasised by the interiewees. Furthermore, only eight of the ten case studies will be profiled below, as the other two did not add substantive new issues to the analysis, though they did help corroborate emerging conclusions.

Build, Operate, Train, Transfer (BoTT) was set up as a PPP between the Department for Water Affairs and Forestry and four private sector consortia for the delivery of water and sanitation infrastructure in four of the poorest provinces in South Africa, with our case study focusing on the programme in the Eastern Cape province. It was introduced soon after the democratic transition in 1994 when it was realized that the government faced significant constraints in fulfilling growing expectations for enhanced water services in the context of massive backlogs, especially in rural areas, and it was terminated ni 2001. Our case study of

this initiative highlights, among other things, the significant, unexpected challenges faced by diverse organisations from different sectors working together even in the context of an ostensibly clear-cut contract, a clearly defined common purpose, and a relatively clear set of objectives. Not only was the implementation of the partnership and the achievement of the objectives constrained by the participants' differing perspectives, methodologies, priorities and accountability frameworks, but even six years after the formal closure of the process there are diverging interpretations of the effectiveness of the initiative, despite numerous internal and external appraisals.

Too little time and attention was arguably devoted at the outset to understanding and accommodating the various parties' underlying interests, objectives and operational culture. This countered the creation of trust between the partners and it contributed to tensions between and within consortium members, especially with regard to the role of the NGO. The function of the contract is noteworthy in this regard. On the one hand, it played an important facilitating role particularly in early stages before the participants had developed relationships with each other. In the words of one interviewee, '[at the beginning] people used the contract instead of relationships to work together'. On the other, it was identified as an important constraint, because it did not allow for sufficient time and flexibility for the partnership to adapt to changing priorities, methods or external circumstances (such as a change in national water policy half-way through the contract period). This suggests that lawyers may need to gain a better appreciation and understanding of partnership dynamics for the purpose of establishing more appropriate contracts.

The *Gautrain* is an 80-kilometre Mass Rapid Transit railway system under construction in Gauteng Province, South Africa, that will ultimately link Johannesburg, Pretoria (Tshwane metropolitan area), and the O.R. Tambo International Airport. Established as a PPP between the provincial government and a private sector consortium, the Gautrain is the other formal, contractual partnership among our case studies. Though BoTT gave rise to a relatively comprehensive set of tendering and contract documents, this is dwarfed by the Gauteng process, in which the contract alone fills 50,000 pages. The current construction stage of the project is also of staggering proportions, with more than 4,500 people working not only along the route in Gauteng, but also in various European and Asian countries. Given the size, prominence and cost to the tax-payer, there has been much public discussion on whether this

represents a cost-effective investment by the government. These issues are tied to broader debates around transport policy, which are beyond the ambit of our case study.

In terms of the design and management issues raised in this paper, the Gautrain also indicates the importance of a contract that covers a comprehensive array of issues and requirements, including programme scope, quality of work, socio-economic development and environmental obligations, security conditions, and so on. Over and above the contract, numerous governance agreements had to be made. In this regard, an interviewee noted, 'An agreement to agree doesn't mean that you are going to agree – governance parametres need to be put in place right at the beginning'.

Nevertheless, despite the comprehensive and formal character of the contract, all interviewees emphasised that informal institutions and relationships between the parties are crucial to success. One of the interviewees noted that even the most detailed contract will need to be interpreted and 'people and behaviour can make implementation [of the contract] simple or difficult'. The fact that the partners in the initiative share office space was highlighted as an important factor in this regard.

Given the scale and nature of the project, accountability to external stakeholders was a prominent requirement. Much of this was institutionalised through the statutory Environmental Impact Assessment and associated public participation process, as well as public accountability mechanisms required from the public sector partners in the initiative. In terms of contractual performance, the partnership was monitored by two indepedent, relatively well resourced bodies, the Independent Socio-Economic Monitor and the Construction Industry Development Board. As noted by one interviewee, 'This accountability is non-negotiable and set in stone – the partnership is not a warm and fuzzy relationship, but it is hard and contractual'. The comprehensive monitoring of the Gautrain PPP contradicts the fear that the state in developing or emerging economies may be unable to effectively monitor PPPs and, in particular, hold the private sector partner to account (Hamann and Boulogne, 2008). The fact that the BoTT initiative also involved relatively comprehensive (if not always coherent) monitoring suggests that South Africa has relatively good monitoring capacity at least for projects of a certain size and prominence.

The *Cape Town Partnership* unites different spheres of government, businesses and a number of not-for-profit organisations with the aim of developing and promoting the inner-city of

Cape Town. Its core is a development facilitation agency striving to mobilise public and private sectors in coordinating and implementing multi-dimensional development programmes and projects. The initiative is remarkable because of the almost universal praise it receives from all interviewees. For a start, as argued by one interviewee, 'leadership is key', and the initiative's CEO and the professional secretariat are widely respected and acknowledged as being a vital force behind the partnership.

The initiative illustrates the potential power of dialogue to effect change. The CEO and secretariat are credited with cultivating a culture of open and frank exchange of views and information and a willingness to engage in a search for innovative 'win-win' solutions. A number of telling examples illustrate how this has involved significant shifts of perspective among some partners, such as the shift from a 'law and order' approach to social crimes to one that seeks to also help homeless people avoid being criminalised and to find long-term shelter. It is important to note that such solutions are not based on the avoidance of conflict – instead it is premised on a proactive approach to resolving conflicts creatively. As noted by the CEO:

> Tensions do emerge. We need to communicate and to work through them. We need forums for these issues to surface. Differences and tensions are fun. They give rise to a dynamic. We try not to shy away from them.

A further telling feature of the Cape Town Partnership is the manner in which its protagonists proactively and consciously distinguish between dialogue and implementation. The CEO argues, 'We seek to steer, rather than row'. Another interviewee emphasised, 'It is important that we do not become too involved in implementing plans because we do not want to become an alternative city government'. There is hence a well-established process through which the partnership and its board will deliberate on a particular issue, and once decisions have been made, a separate structure is established to take forward the implementation of those decisions. This new structure may be linked to the partnership secretariat, as in the case of the City Improvement Districts, or it may be entirely separate.

The other partnership focused on urban development issues is in Grabouw, a small town in the Western Cape (close to Cape Town) characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality. The *Grabouw Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI)* is an initiative of the Development Bank of Southern Africa, with the purpose of facilitating a more integrated,

participatory and sustainability-focused development planning process. This includes a Social Accord deliberated upon by a multi-stakeholder forum. The principles and guidelines of this accord have been translated into an integrated development plan for the town, linked to particular implementation projects, some of which are proposed in the form of PPPs.

Overall, the SDI was evaluated positively by a diverse range of interviewees. It has succeeded in providing an impetus for significant change in the long-term development trajectory of the town. However, though the Social Compact Forum played an important role, a range of concerns were raised with regard to its limited inclusiveness and representation of the broader community and also the degree to which it allowed diverse interests in the community to be reconciled. The experience therefore highlights the difficulties in developing a broad community participation process in the context of South Africa's divided and diverse communities. The process was also challenged by limited local government capacity and changes at the political and administrative level.

The third case study located in an urban development context is in Rustenburg in the North West Province, a town dominated by the platinum mining industry. This case study deals with a range of initiatives that have sought to facilitate improved collaboration among the mining companies and also between the mining companies and the local government and other key role-players, such as the Royal Bafokeng Administration (RBA), a prominent traditional authority and land owner. It provides ample evidence of the difficulties and complexities of cross-sector collaboration in many South African local contexts.

There continue to be fundamental disagreements regarding responsibility for developing a strategic approach to addressing the informal settlements (or slums) and other infrastructure challenges in the area, such as water provision. Local government has the statutory responsibility for infrastructure planning and development, but it has been constrained by limited capacity, resources and legitimacy. The municipality's challenges have also been premised on its high-profile conflict with the RBA, which sees itself as the legitimate local government in its area and furthermore has negotiated lucrative royalty and ownership agreements with some of the mining companies. The RBA seeks to reserve its land for members of the Bafokeng tribe and hence resists the upgrading of the informal settlements, which are predominantly occupied by immigrants from around the country or beyond looking for jobs. This context also contributes to tensions between mining companies and local communities, as there are not always clear representation and accountability channels.

There is the widespread perception that the mines have an important responsibility for social problems and broader development issues around the mines, due to the historical system of migrant labor and given the considerable benefits the mines are reaping from their operations. In the past, the mining houses have only insufficiently addressed these social problems around the mines. Their philanthropic efforts – often referred to as corporate social investment – have not contributed to sustainably addressing the development challenges, partly because of a lack of collaboration among themselves and with other role-players. However, since 2003, mining companies have begun to organise themselves better in the Producers' Forum, which has task teams on water, infrastructure, housing and energy. Participants note that it has taken many years and dilligent facilitation for the Forum to give rise to initial suggestions for joint action. The Forum is currently at the cusp of a transition from dialogue to implementation, but this transition has brought to the fore numerous challenges, including the realisation that additional role-players (such as the national water department) need to be brought into the discussion, thus setting the process back again.

Recognising that the municipality is the key institution to facilitate better provision of services and coordination between different role-players in the region, some companies are making targeted contributions to build the capacity of local government through the provision of human and technical resources. However, in some cases this has increased tensions with the traditional authority. For instance, Impala Platinum in 2003 started building an office for local ward councillors, only for the Bafokeng traditional administration to destroy the structure with reference to a land use contract. The municipality has also established a mechanism for communicating directly to the Producers' Forum through the Rustenburg Stakeholder Forum. But rather than facilitate an open and transparent discussion on converging and diverging interests (as recommended by Covey and Brown, 2001), there is a risk of this deteriorating into a platform for the municipality to ask for hand-outs, with a resulting decline in participation by company representatives.

The sixth case study is on an initiative called *Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE)*. The primary focus of CAPE is on biodiversity and conservation. It is a partnership between the South African government, international donors and a range of international and national NGOs to protect the rich biological heritage of the Cape Floristic Region. A memorandum of understanding was signed in 2001. Though not formally a partner in the CAPE, the private sector is involved in a number of affiliated programmes, such as the

Biodiversity and Wine Initiative. CAPE is characterised by the willingness and ability of its facilitators and a core group of partners to facilitate and engage in inclusive dialogue in quest of identifying win-win solutions.

This is not without tensions, also considering the well-worn conflicts between environmental NGOs with a strong conservation agenda, on the one hand, and other groups, including most government organisations, that are focused more on socio-economic development. Not only has CAPE managed to establish itself as an honest broker between these interests and perspectives, but by most accounts it has helped establish a new conservation paradigm that focuses on the complementarities – rather than only the trade-offs – between conservation and socio-economic development. A particularly telling characteristic is a positive approach to tensions among facilitators and key partner organisations. The director of the coordinating unit argued, 'It is good if there's a bit of tension – this keeps the partnership energised – but we need to keep it from bursting – it's a bit like a pressure cooker!'

The CAPE case study highlights the tensions between dialogue and implementation. Whereas the key purpose of CAPE is to align the partners' strategies with the overarching CAPE strategy – this is primarily a dialogue function – it is also tasked with distributing donor funding to a range of conservation related projects. The director of the coordinating unit argued, 'There is a tension between vetting and approving project proposals, on the one hand, and acting as a neutral broker at the same time – the broker role is premised on relationships, and it's not always easy to build relationships if you have to keep checking up on project progress'.

The seventh case study is on the *Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Leadership and Innovation Network*. This initiative entailed a carefully structured process of preparation, research and facilitated dialogue between various government, civil society and private sector organisations with a role in responding to the profound challenges related to OVCs in South Africa. This is a particularly interesting case study because of its explicit emphasis on innovative facilitation principles and techniques. Significant inspiration was drawn, for instance, from Otto Scharmer's conception of the U-process, which – simply speaking – sees groups go through three phases of, first, immersion into the content of a problem or issue, followed by a 'retreat' that allows individuals and groups within the group time and space to engage with the issues at hand in a manner that involves their 'whole selves', and finally a concluding phase of spontaneous innovation (Scharmer, 2007). As argued by one of the

facilitators, 'The U-process is particularly useful to innovate, in situations where not all the answers are known'.

These inspirations have led to the process taking on a particular character. For instance, prior to a meeting of the eventual network the facilitators conducted comprehensive, long 'dialogue interviews' with prospective participants. The purpose of these interviews was not primarily to gain information, as noted by one of the interviewers: '[T]he interviews were an important part of building relationships and served as an enrolment exercise to bring people into the process... we would discuss people's life story, ask unexpected questions'. The OVC Network initiative thus shares with some of the other successful case studies a significant amount of energy, resources and attention devoted to building relationships and understanding the various participants' perspectives and interests. This emphasis on personal communication built trust and provided the basis for most accountability measures. In other words, rather than rely on written agreements, accountability was established by means of a systematic process of ensuring authentic, personal and informal communication among and between the facilitators and participants. As noted by one of the facilitators: 'The partnership deals with accountability primarily through conversation with all participants - the interpersonal relationships are crucial in that they develop trust and transparency, which provide accountability'.

A feature of the broader philosophy of the initiative is an emphasis on going beyond intellectual and practical discussion to encompass participants' emotions. In some instances this involved innovative facilitation techniques, such as a 'power game' to evoke emotions associated with different positions of power – this was seen as a crucial mechanism for participants to move beyond their entrenched perspectives based on their professional position. It opened up space for empathetic listening and mutual emotional support. In effect – and with reference to Fisher and Ury's (1981) framework – this was an innovative, novel mechanism to assist a shift from positions-based to interest-based personal interactions. Though one of the interviewees expressed frustration about the slow pace of the initiative and uncertainties about its impact, even she emphasised the value of the 'process and the time allocated to analyse [underlying] issues'.

The final case study is on what has also been referred to as 'social dialogue', or forums for policy-related discussions between the government, labour, business and civil society. The *National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac)* is based on a national act

(No. 35 of 1994) and is well-known also internationally for the manner in which it has facilitated social dialogue on matters related to national policy, with the objective of reaching decisions by consensus. It has been credited with playing an important role especially in the early years after the political transition from apartheid, contributing to the mitigation of conflict and building trust between different sectors of society in what was often a volatile political environment. This context provided high stakes and raised commitment among key participants – in the language of negotiation theory, all participants had a low 'Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement' or BATNA (Fisher and Ury, 1981). As noted by one interviewee, 'If we had failed to agree, there would have been blood on the streets!' This also contributed to respected and high-level leaders being appointed to faciltate and to represent the stakeholder groups in order to ensure the initiative's success.

This sense of urgency and high-level leadership seems to have diminished in recent years, possibly because most of the post-1994 legislative reform process has been completed. However, it was argued by some interviewees that indeed there is still an important purpose for Nedlac, but its role is diminished by a perceived lack of capacity and leadership within the secretariat, which constrains its ability to create and fulfil such a purpose. It is also constrained by some government departments that are less supportive of social dialogue than the Department of Labour was in the mid-1990s. Accountability of the negotiating parties to their constituencies was also identified by interviewees as an important challenge, particularly in the case of the civil society sector that is involved in one of the negotiating chambers. There is thus the danger of a vicious circle of limited capacity and leadership in the secretariat, limited ability to identify and fulfil relevant objectives, limited accountability and mandate among negotiating parties, and limited buy-in and commitment by key potential partner organisations.

4 DISCUSSION

Taken together, the eight case studies confirm the importance of and add nuance to the success factors identified in the literature introduced at the outset of the paper. They underscore the relevance, for instance, of the six principles of the Partnership Assessment Tool (Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Hardy, Hudson and Waddington, 2003) and the conditions identified by Covey and Brown (2002). As illustrated by the case study of Nedlac, for example, factors such as the identification and common agreement on a clear and well-defined purpose, personal and organisational commitment to the initiative, partners'

accountability to their constituencies, and the organisational capacity of the secretariat are not independent of each other but feed into each other in either a mutually reinforcing or constraining manner, much like the cycle of trust-building described by Vangen and Huxham (2003). This is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Schematic illustration of possible virtuous or vicious circle of interaction between diverse partnership success factors
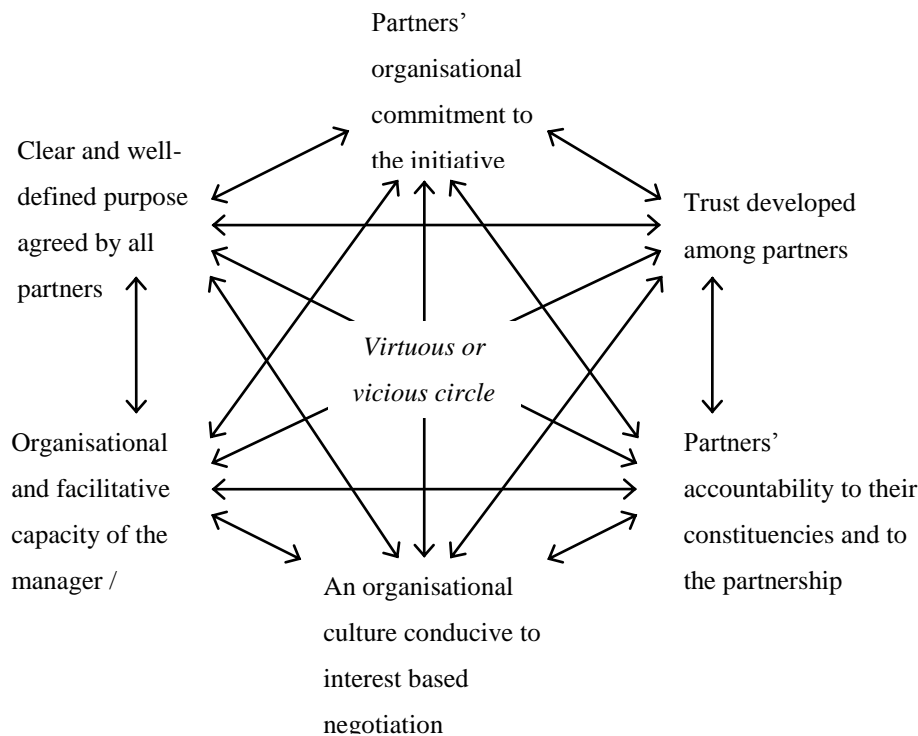
Furthermore, the case studies have highlightd the important role of the local and national socio-economic context (see also Rein and Stott, 2009). The apartheid legacy of extreme social inequality, as well as significant cultural diversity, make the kind of inclusionary and deliberative process (Holmes and Scoones, 1999) envisaged in, say, the Grabouw SDI a very challenging undertaking. Similarly, capacity constraints especially at the local government level, compounded by tensions and uncertainties in the relationship between local government and traditional authorities, impede municipalities from playing the legitimate brokering or partnering roles that they may be expected to fulfil in the example of the Rustenburg case study.

Three further themes emerge from the case studies that contain some novel contributions to the literature. First, the case studies illustrate many of the challenges associated with establishing novel organisational forms, with correspondingly novel approaches to power,

leadership and accountability. In effective partnerships, decision-making power is not held or exerted primarily by organisational hierarchy, state mandate or market competition, but rather on the basis of the legitimacy brought about by the 'right' people being involved in authentic and solutions-oriented dialogue. The legitimacy of the partnership convenor or manager is particularly important.

In this vein, our case studies thus underscore the argument that sufficient time and dedicated attention need to be given to enrolling all relevant individuals and organisations and to building relationships and trust – in short, social capital (e.g. Portes, 1998) – between them (Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Vangen and Huxham, 2003; BPD, 2002). The importance of social capital was emphasised also in those instances in which legal contracts ostensibly regulate commitments and behaviour, as in the cases of the BoTT and Grautrain. Cases on both ends of our typology spectrum illustrated the potential trust building benefits of non-conventional facilitation methods, with games playing an important role in BoTT and the OVC Network, and the latter also including long 'dialogue interviews' between facilitators and participants.

The case studies emphasise the role of social capital in creating informal accountability mechanisms and resulting legitimacy. So, while the case studies underscore the argument that accountability arrangements formalised in partnership governance arrangements (Zadek and Radovich, 2005) and partners' accountability to their constituencies (Covey and Brown, 2001) are vital success factors of partnerships, the case studies reported on here suggest that an important complementary means for establishing accountability is through informal relationships and social capital.

The second, related theme is on the role of organisational culture and the partnership manager or facilitator, in particular, in fostering interest based negotiation with a focus on innovation. In this regard, Covey and Brown's (2001) conditions have shown themselves to be particularly apposite. For instance, the inability of the participants and the convenors in the Rustenburg Stakeholder Forum to facilitate discussion on converging and diverging interests in the service of agreeing on a compelling partnership purpose is arguably at the core of that initiative's failure to deliver much needed organisational coordination and collaboration in the area.

On the other hand, the Cape Town Partnership and CAPE illustrate the kind of leadership and organisational culture that is conducive to interest based negotiation. A compelling aspect of this is the explicit embrace by the partnership managers and some of the participants, as well, of tension as a catalytic force that could be harnessed to identify 'options for mutual gain' (Covey and Brown, 2001), rather than mere compromises. Furthermore, this proactive approach to conflict led to demonstrable shifts in perspective among participants, illustrating the social learning (Manz and Sims, 1980) potential of this kind of partnership leadership.

Finally, the case studies suggest a suite of issues pertaining to the relationship between partnership type and success factors. Figure 3 maps six of the case studies with regard to the typology mentioned above. The two PPPs are quite clearly implementation focused partnerships, premised on clearly defined, tangible deliverables and correspondingly binding legal agreements that specify each of the partners' roles and responsibilities. Nedlac is an example of a partnership focused primarily on dialogue. Though there is legislation that provides for the structure of the negotiations – and hence this particular dialogue is more formalised than, say, the OVC network – the partners' roles and responsibilities are not clearly and legally defined.

The figure also suggests that some of the case studies are what may be referred to as 'bifurcated partnerships' – i.e. they include separate but linked initiatives that display characteristics of either dialogue or implementation. In the case of both the Grabouw SDI and the Cape Town Partnership – used here as illustrative examples– the core of the initiative is a dialogue forum, but where particular implementation efforts or projects are necessary, these are managed by separate organizational structures linked to the forum. In the case of the Grabouw SDI this takes the form of particular PPPs, though the relationship between the dialogue aspects of the partnership and these PPPs arguably has not been managed very effectively. In the case of the Cape Town Partnership there has been a very explicit and proactive separation between the dialogue process and the implementation of decisions reached through this dialogue, including in particular the implementation activities of the separate organisational structure responsible for the City Improvement District (CID).

CAPE is an example of a partnership that defines itself primarily as a dialogue forum, but which also includes implementation aspects – in this instance, these relate primarily to the dissemination of funds for particular projects. It is hence represented by an elongated form. As argued by numerous interviewees in this case study, the simultaneous requirement to

facilitate dialogue and manage implementation projects is placing significant strain on the coordinating unit, in particular.

Figure 3: Placing the case studies in the 'Implementation – Dialogue' typology, including two examples of 'bifurcated partnerships'
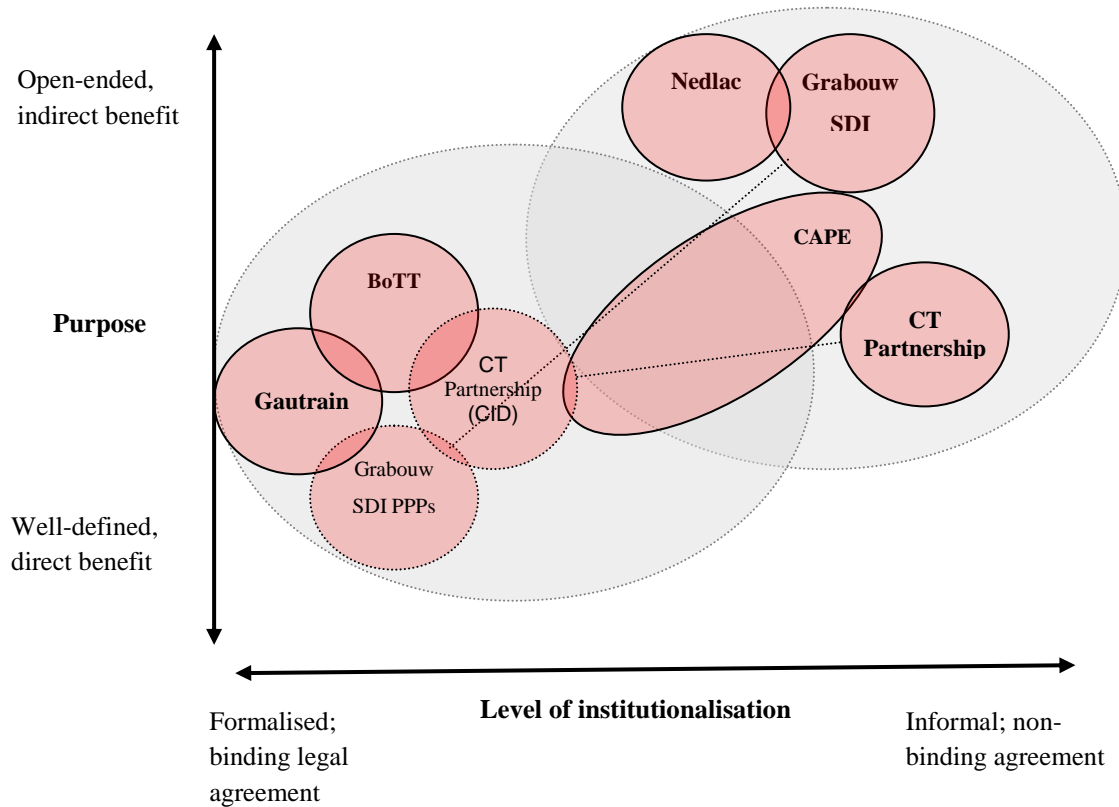
The case studies therefore show that the typology developed on the basis of the literature review and the 75 examples is of direct relevance to the strategy and operations of cross-sector collaboration initiatives. However, the case studies also suggest that over and above representing types of partnerships, 'dialogue' and 'implementation' are also important elements of all collaboration initiatives. So for instance even PPPs that have an overt emphasis on implementation and contractual agreement have an important, often under-appreciated aspect of dialogue that needs fostering.

Hence the resulting message for partnership facilitators and participants is to recognise 'dialogue' and 'implementation' as important elements or motives within partnerships, which are associated with different organisational logics. On the one hand, effective dialogue requires that the purpose of the interaction is not defined too narrowly or restrictively, and that sufficient flexibility is also maintained in the organisational structure with regard to

membership and partners' roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, effective implementation requires a greater focus in defining the purpose and more structured and formalised organisational arrangements, which are likely to include legal agreements. The most obviously successful partnerships in our sample have in common an explicit understanding and a corresponding response to the tensions between these organisational logics. Managing this tension effectively is hence likely to be a key success factor in cross-sector collaboration.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This article set out to identify leadership success factors of cross-sector partnerships, with an emphasis on structural, process and relational aspects of such initiatives. Significant scholarly and practice-oriented work on identifying such success factors exists. Nevertheless, we felt an analytical inductive methodology, which takes this existing literature as a point of departure, was appropriate given the need to add nuance to existing constructs, to explicitly consider the implications of different partnership types, and to assess the role of socio-economic and other contextual factors in an emerging economy.

Based on ten comparative case studies, our findings confirm the importance of and add detail to the success factors identified in the literature, and they suggest that these factors are not independent of each other but feed into each other in either a mutually reinforcing or constraining manner. They also highlight the important role of the local and national socio-economic context. In addition, three themes emerge from the case studies that contain some novel contributions to the literature. First, the case studies emphasise the role of social capital in creating informal accountability mechanisms. Second, they highlight the kind of leadership and organisational culture that is conducive to interest based negotiation, with an emphasis on the explicit embrace of tensions between partners or between perspectives as a catalytic force to identify innovative 'win-win' options. Finally, the case studies suggest that 'dialogue' and 'implementation' are important elements of all collaboration initiatives, and that these elements are associated with different organisational logics and require corresponding leadership responses.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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