



Effectiveness of Partnerships for Sustainable Development – Behavioural Pathways and Impacts
SNIS Project Final Report
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Abstract of the Executive Summary

From their initial endorsement at the 2002 Johannesburg Summit to their role as key means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, partnerships between public and non-State actors have emerged as a key form of governance as part of global efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure human health and well-being, and fight environmental degradation. While academic literature provides valuable insights on the rise of partnerships, we still lack a generalizable framework for understanding the actual impacts of existing initiatives, as well as the conditions that may shape them. Accordingly, this project sought to develop an interdisciplinary conceptualisation of pathways to partnership effectiveness that should be broadly applicable across different sectors and levels of governance. In addition, the project presented an exploratory analysis of four hypotheses about the internal structuring of partnerships and its influence on partnership effectiveness. Overall, the project raises important theoretical and methodological discussions on the very concept of ‘effectiveness’ and proposes a novel analytical framework for its study. In addition, it provides researchers and practitioners in different fields with a broad range of case studies and cross-cutting analyses that suggest important practical implications for the design of new partnerships and the updating of existing initiatives.

Executive Summary

1. Research Plan

1.1. Problem statement and research objective

As the challenges facing the global community become more complex and interdependent, transnational partnerships have gained momentum as mechanisms of governance across multiple scales and levels. The rise of partnerships, including public-private partnerships (PPPs), has been often driven or justified by their anticipated effects on overcoming collective action failures at a time of accelerating transformations at the interface of Earth and societal systems, and responding to what is widely perceived as a growing retreat of multilateralism. Ever since the endorsement of partnerships among the official outcomes of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, this form of governance is advanced across global efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure human health and well-being, and fight climate change and environmental degradation. As a result, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development now emphasizes the central role of multi-stakeholder partnerships as a key means of implementation of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, despite the widely anticipated effects of partnerships on improving cross-sectoral collaboration and sustainable development outcomes, we still have limited knowledge on the extent to which such expectations may have materialized. On the one hand, no established frameworks or agreed-upon indicators exist at the international level for evaluating partnerships, with the consequence that the notion of partnership effectiveness itself is often contested. On the other hand, the body of academic scholarship dealing with questions of effectiveness lacks broad systematic studies that focus on both (i) an assessment of the actual effectiveness of partnerships, and (ii) an analysis of the mechanisms through which these effects are brought about.

The analytic motivation of the research project on *Effectiveness of Partnerships for Advancing the SDGs* was to examine precisely this tension inherent in the paradigm of partnerships, namely the disconnect between their many anticipated effects and the limited systematic assessment of actual effectiveness. The objective was to advance a research agenda that is both of theoretical importance for understanding complex governance systems and the role of partnerships therein, and of pressing policy significance for sustainable development. Two broad questions guided this multi-disciplinary inquiry. First, from a theoretical perspective, can we provide a more generalizable framework for understanding the pathways and effects through which partnerships, as part of increasingly complex governance landscape, contribute to addressing sustainability problems? Second, from an empirical perspective, can we use such a framework to systematically assess to what extent current partnership arrangements are contributing to such implementation?

This research project aimed to address these two questions and fill existing research gaps in at least three ways. First, the project sought to adopt and present an interdisciplinary conceptualisation of pathways to partnership effectiveness that should be broadly applicable across different sectors and levels of governance (see the *Results and Analysis* section). Secondly, the project presented an exploratory and theory-testing analysis of four hypotheses about the internal structuring of partnerships and its influence on partnership effectiveness, drawing on the literature on institutional design, cross-sectoral collaboration, and collective action. These four hypotheses are the following:

- *Sophisticated contracting, in terms of establishing appropriate specificity of commitments and accountability mechanisms, is likely to increase the effectiveness of partnerships.*
- *Credible commitment of resources is likely to enhance partnership effectiveness.*

- *Partnership processes that facilitate the adaptability of partnership arrangements are likely to be conducive to greater effectiveness.*
- *Partnerships that foster innovation - understood broadly as creating or facilitating access to innovative processes, institutions, technologies, or financing - are more likely to be effective in advancing sustainability objectives.*

This approach enabled the research team to focus on how partnership structures and processes shape internal collaboration and external impacts, while still allowing the empirical analysis to consider the interplay of such features with contextual determinants of institutional effectiveness.

Finally, the project sought to combine this innovative framework with a mix of interdisciplinary research methods in order to present new real-world data and case studies on partnership effectiveness. In particular, it aimed to offer both a broad range of thematic case studies (with an emphasis on experiences from sectors including biodiversity, climate, clean energy, natural resource management, children's wellbeing and rights, and global health) and a series of cross-cutting analyses through which specific themes that are relevant to the framework, such as the importance of local implementation and the degree of inclusiveness within partnerships, are discussed.

1.2. Research methods

Building on the project's overall analytical framework, which was developed and progressively refined during the internal workshops which took place in December 2017 and October 2019 (for a discussion of the framework, see the *Results and Analysis* section), the research team decided to adopt an inter-disciplinary and mixed-methods approach to empirical inquiry.

This approach was usually applied both within and across the different project's strands, in order to measure, assess or model elements of effectiveness at different levels of analysis. This allowed the project as a whole to collect insights on both micro-level pathways and effects of a single partnership, as well as on broader impacts in the context of societies or across clusters of initiatives. At the same time, this also meant that not all project strands sought to utilise the same methodology or address all the original research hypotheses, as they rather targeted complementary dimensions of the overall framework.

Broadly speaking, the project strands can thus be divided in two large groups. A first group consisted of case studies on the basis of which researchers analysed different dimensions of partnership effectiveness and draw comparative conclusions. The researchers selected the cases from the issue areas of health and environment, two large policy fields where partnerships have taken on a range of governance functions over the last three decades, and questions about partnership effectiveness have gained a particular salience and importance. Within each of these issue areas, the cases examined partnerships straddling the lines between local, regional and global sustainability, applying systematically the theoretical framework on pathways to effectiveness. The researchers chose partnerships with a sufficiently long history, to ensure the availability of primary data from partnership publications and related reports, as well as secondary data from semi-structured interviews, desk-based research, and (in one instance) extensive fieldwork. Through systematically-documented analytical narratives, the researchers then gained fine-grained knowledge on partnership goals and the degree of their attainment, as well as their effects on partners, affected populations, and institutions outside the partnership. Finally, the variation of impacts was examined not only across case studies, but also inter-temporally within cases and across different pathways. The case studies included in this group are the following:

- **Biodiversity and clean energy**

Cases covered: Amazon Region Protected Areas Programme (ARPA); Galápagos Wind Power Project; Cosa Rica's Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (INBio)

Researchers involved: Prof Liliana Andonova, Mr Dario Piselli

- **Local protected area management**

Cases covered: Sustainable Development Reserve of Uatumã, Brazil

Researchers involved: Mr Livio Miles Silva Muller

- **Carbon markets**

Cases covered: Dataset of international carbon markets established by the World Bank since the Prototype Carbon Fund in 2000

Researchers involved: Prof Katharina Michaelowa, Prof Axel Michaelowa and Prof Liliana Andonova

- **Access to drugs, vaccines and diagnostics**

Cases covered: Dataset of product development partnerships (PDPs) developed since the early 1990s

Researchers involved: Prof Suerie Moon and Ms Marcela Vieira (*both not part of initial research team*)

- **Global health**

Cases covered: Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)

Researchers involved: Dr Mara Pillinger (*not part of initial research team*)

The second group of contributions presented empirical analyses linked to a set of cross-cutting themes (e.g. actor participation in partnership boards, the importance of the start-up phase of partnerships, the promotion of transparency through partnerships, and the adaptability of partnership commitments) that have been discussed in the literature before, but for which there is still limited analysis on their role in supporting or undermining effectiveness. Because of their cross-cutting focus, these project strands broadly used larger n datasets and quantitative methodologies (e.g. econometric analysis of relationship between partnership participation and macroeconomic stability, coding for effectiveness indicators in existing partnership databases, fault-line analysis of partnership boards), alongside evidence from specific cases. These strands provided a broader understanding of the partnership *process* and how its characteristic may influence different pathways to effectiveness. In addition, they opened the project's empirical explorations to issues such as human rights, resource extraction, and sustainability across levels of governance, providing additional systematic evidence on the conditions for effective partnerships. The case studies included among these contributions are the following:

1. **Effectiveness of partnerships on transparency**

Cases covered: Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)

Researchers involved: Prof Gilles Carbonnier and Ms Jamie Marie Fraser

2. **Adaptability and effectiveness**

Cases covered: Dataset of environmental partnerships submitted to the Roy Family Award from 2003 to 2018

Researchers involved: Ms Amanda Sardonis and Mr Henry Lee

3. **The role of partnership boards**

Cases covered: Three financing partnerships focusing on climate (Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund, and Global Environment Facility) and three financing

partnerships focusing on global health (GAVI, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and Roll Back Malaria Partnership)

Researchers involved: Prof Moira V. Faul and Mr Younes Boulanguem

4. **Start-up phase of partnerships**

Cases covered: Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (GPEVAC)

Researchers involved: Dr Susan Bissell

1.3. Research schedule

The project started in November 2017 and was originally scheduled to end in November 2019, although it later received a series of extensions from SNIS, with a final date set for 30 November 2020. The project activities, as effectively carried out, were broadly divided in four main phases, which are discussed as follows:

- **November – December 2017:** Coordinated research design and protocol on core hypotheses; initial pooling of data; pre-test of methods; first internal workshop to further refine overall analytical framework with academic partners.
- **January 2018 – September 2019:** Field research (for all project strands), data analysis, preparation of first version of main draft papers; preparation and submission of additional publications (i.e. those not meant to be included in the final edited volume).
- **October 2019 – March 2020:** Second internal workshop and presentation of main draft papers; revision of the draft papers, based on the feedback received during the second workshop; third (final) internal workshop to present the final draft version of the main papers, discuss edited volume structure, and plan additional publications and outreach.
- **April – November 2020:** Preparation of the draft edited volume and submission of proposal to potential publishers; final public event with practitioners from the international Geneva community.

Overall, the first phase of the research (November 2017 – December 2017) was completed according to the original timeline, resulting in the definition of a coordinated research design, the refining of the core research hypotheses and project methodologies, and the organization of the first internal workshop with the project's academic partners (hosted by the Graduate Institute of Geneva on 4 December 2017).

The second phase of the research (January 2018 – September 2019) was initially supposed to last until December 2018 but was extended to adapt to the minor difficulties encountered by the different research groups in the initial recruitment of research assistants as well as in data gathering, coding and analysis efforts, which were outlined in our Intermediate Report to SNIS.

The third phase of the research (October 2019 to March 2020) included the second and third internal workshops of the project. The second workshop took place in Florence (Italy) on 7-8 October 2019. Over the two days, the academic partners of the project presented early versions of their main papers and began discussing final publication options and other dissemination strategies. Drawing on the feedback received in Florence, each research group then started a round of paper revisions which culminated in the third internal workshop, held online on 19-20 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the workshop, full drafts of the main papers were shared with the principal investigators and a final decision was taken on the structure of the edited volume, the timeline for the submission of the proposal, and the potential publishers to be contacted. This phase also saw some of the researchers present their draft papers during other academic conferences and seminars (see *Past*

and *Expected Publications and Other Activities* section), thus allowing them to receive external inputs from fellow scholars and practitioners.

The fourth phase of the project (April – November 2020) is currently being finalized. The final public event, which was originally scheduled to take place together with the third internal workshop, had to be postponed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and was rescheduled for 16 November 2020. In addition, the principal investigators began the preparation of the edited volume, submitted the book proposal to the identified publisher, and signed the publication agreement during this phase.

2. Project results

2.1. *Elaboration of a conceptual framework and typology on partnership effectiveness*

The results of the project can be said to include both the empirical findings of the different research strand and the overall development of a conceptual framework to analyse partnership effectiveness and test research hypotheses, which has been first discussed in the December 2017 workshop and subsequently refined through an iterative process of collaboration between the project partners.

With respect to this second aspect, the framework developed by the project draws on different strands of literature across disciplines to develop a comprehensive conceptualisation of partnerships effectiveness. According to the framework, the ultimate goal of partnerships should be to effectively create value for societies by helping to solve the sustainable development problems they face. In turn, a partnership's contribution to problem-solving should be seen as connected to a series of intermediate pathways that represent the different and more discrete dimensions along which partnership effectiveness can be manifested. Our research particularly focuses on five such intermediate pathways, namely: (i) goal attainment; (ii) creation of value for the partners; (iii) increased collaboration inside the partnership; (iv) impact on affected populations; and (v) influence on collaboration and institutions outside the partnership.

At the most fundamental level, partnership effectiveness can be measured in terms of the extent to which the partnership itself has been implemented and achieved its formally identified goals (*goal attainment*). Secondly, effective partnerships are also expected to create value for the partners that are involved in them. Such value is assumed to be additional to what each sector can achieve with its own resources and logics of action in order to justify the costs and changes that are intrinsic to partnering (*creation of value for the partners*). Third, collaboration among partners is a pathway that produces important effects itself in terms of empowerment or disempowerment of actors, the participatory quality and procedural legitimacy of the partnership, the efficiency of achieving partnership goals, and partnership durability (*collaboration inside the partnership*). Fourth, the effectiveness of partnerships should be investigated with respect to their benefits for target populations, the inclusion of target populations in solution design, and also the extent to which the target population is able to influence behaviour and willingness to engage in new commitments on a specific issue (*impact on affected populations*). Finally, partnerships for sustainable development can influence external actors and existing complex systems of governance at the same time as they are affected by them, either by crowding out more ambitious and binding instruments or by acting as a catalyst or learning mechanism that can facilitate the brokerage of new formal institutions and agreements (*influence on collaboration and institutions outside the partnership*).

This conceptualization captures the notion that both the direct goal-related outcomes of partnerships, as well as their influence on a variety of actors at different levels, represent integral components of any analysis of their overall effects on sustainable development. This multifaceted framework thus provides a disaggregated approach for understanding effectiveness and assessing it empirically. Throughout our research, the application of the framework to empirical cases was further supported by the adoption of a potential impact chain of partnerships, which we used to evaluate causal processes and relationships between partnership activities and outcomes/impacts, as well as by a list

of explanatory factors that helped us evaluate counterfactuals and alternative explanations (see Figure 2 and Table 1 below).

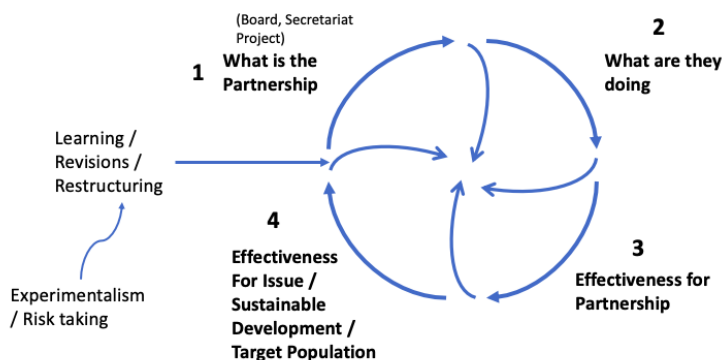


Figure 2 (above): Impact chain of partnerships

Category	List of potential explanatory factors for partnership effectiveness
Resources	Leveraged Resources Unused Resources Additional Resources Resources Available in the Wider Partnership Landscape Sharing of Financial Resources Financial Sustainability Planning Resources Available in the Wider Organizational Ecosystem Share of Public vs. Private Resources
External factors	Salience of the problem (to whom?) Use of Mandatory Instruments Policy Pressure Legal/Regulatory Influence Advocacy Filling Gaps of the Above Disasters Measurability of Intervention
Characteristics / Structure of the partnership	Domestic ownership / Benefits for All Partners / Distribution of Benefits / Formal vs. Informal Partnerships / Where it was initiated (e.g. Global South) Presence of Champions / Motivation / Leadership / Opportunities for Benefit-sharing / Availability of Incentives / Who has Influence on the Agenda / Internal Rulebook of the Partnership Goal setting among partners / Ambition and achievability of the goals / Measurement and Accounting / Consensus Rules / Conditionalities

Table 1: list of explanatory factors which explain the potential chains of causality which determine the effectiveness of partnerships.

2.2. Empirical findings

2.2.1. Pathways to effectiveness

Our case studies confirm the idea that nominal goal attainment should be seen as a helpful but incomplete measure of partnership effectiveness, and that in the absence of substantial influence on external collaboration and positive impacts on affected populations, it is unlikely to contribute by itself to solving the problems that the partnership has been created to address. It should be noted that measuring goal attainment can serve as a complementary indicator of partnership impacts, particularly when the presence of adequate monitoring mechanisms and disaggregated sets of targets makes it possible to disentangle success areas from unattained objectives. At the same time, overarching partnership goals may be framed narrowly to avoid conflicts between the partners or be too simplistic to capture the multifaceted dimensions of a sustainability problem. Moreover, because partnerships are flexible governance arrangements, goals may be easily revised or shift over time, thus making it difficult to assess them against the original ambition of the partnership.

Rather than on goal attainment per se, our findings thus show that partnership impacts are often produced at the level of local implementation and through effects on affected populations. Because the notion of sustainable development requires an integrated consideration of the social, economic and environmental effects of partnerships, the presence of such impacts can also be seen as a necessary condition for a partnership’s ability to contribute to problem-solving for sustainability. This is particularly evident for partnerships in the areas of biodiversity, natural resource management and clean energy, which may formally achieve their environmental goals but still present an uncertain long-term outlook due to failures in leveraging local participation and addressing negative incentives and underlying socio-economic drivers of environmental degradation. As a consequence, our case studies suggest that taking local conditions, the livelihoods of affected populations, and the mediating role of domestic institutions into account may play a crucial role in determining overall partnership effectiveness.

For their part, the creation of value for partners and the effects on internal collaboration can be seen as intermediate pathways to the problem-solving effectiveness of a partnership, but they are unlikely to compensate the absence of positive impacts on affected populations, external collaboration and goal-attainment. For example, the value expected by the partners may represent an important reason for partnering, but it may be independent from the actual achievement of partnership objectives (e.g. reputational gains, opportunities for future market access or market-creation, access to new streams of funding). Similarly, improved collaboration between partners may not necessarily coincide with behavioural change, as it is possible that no participating actor had actually been previously involved in activities directly detrimental to the partnership’ overarching objectives.

Finally, with respect to the role of partnerships in increasing collaboration between external actors and in wider governance regimes, our findings show that the high-order impacts of partnerships can contribute to problem-solving for sustainability even in cases where a specific initiative do not achieve its own goals, for example through its spill-over effects on organizational learning, capacity-building and dissemination of new knowledge and practices. In turn, the success of a partnership model does not guarantee that the partnership will be replicated outside of its geographical and political context or have a catalytic impact on international collaboration. Whereas this might be

expected for initiatives that do not directly engage in regulatory activities at the international level, such as most of the ones included in our analysis, it also speaks to the magnitude and complexity of the SDGs implementation gap, as well as to the inherent limitations faced by partnerships in a context that remains characterized by rapid changes in national political environments and ongoing gridlocks in intergovernmental negotiations.

2.2.2. Partnership structuring and its influence on effectiveness

Several of the project's research strands sought to analyse the interplay of partnerships' impacts with the four characteristics of partnership structuring that we adopted as hypotheses explaining variable effectiveness, namely: (i) sophisticated contracting; (ii) credible commitment of resources; (iii) adaptability of partnership arrangements; and (iv) innovation.

Based on our findings, it is evident that these institutional features and dynamics do make a difference on the long-term impacts of a partnership. First, the presence of sophisticated forms of contracting that clarify the common objectives, approaches and expectations of the partnership can be seen as important factors in strengthening trust and mobilizing the comparative advantages of each partner. While these forms of contracting do not necessarily need to be innovative, they must build a shared, long-term vision in order to avoid lack of accountability and uncertainty in the level of partner commitment. Second, the credible commitment of resources, which appears to be stronger when a partnership builds upon pre-existing collaborative efforts involving the same partners, may contribute to further building trust and raising capacity for implementation. Third, we find that the capacity to foster adaptation and experimentation through learning-by-doing approaches can also provide an explanatory factor for the longevity of partnerships, although it might not be able to overcome a lack of commitment by partners and major flaws in the initial partnership strategy. Fourth, innovation in terms of governance and funding mechanisms, rather than access to innovative products and technologies, appears to be an important driver of resilience and durability through its capacity to insulate partnership arrangements from external shocks and changing political conditions.

Our findings also show that these specific conditions for effectiveness are unlikely to operate in isolation. On the contrary, they should be expected to exist along a continuum, interacting with each other through positive (or negative) feedback loops throughout a partnership's governance history. In particular, many of our case studies suggest that the design of sophisticated forms of contracting may play an early role as a core driver of effectiveness by: (i) clarifying the common objectives and approaches of the partnership; (ii) determining the levels of partner engagement; (iii) establishing the value expected by each partner as a result of such engagement; and (iv) creating channels for accountability that can insulate partnership activities from the risks of abrupt political change or shifting interests. In doing so, sophisticated contracting can thus help explain the emergence of the other three conditions for effectiveness. First, the presence of clear governance arrangements and conditions for accountability is important to encourage the credible commitment of resources by partners. Secondly, the clear articulation of each partner's comparative expertise and commitments facilitates the delivery of new products, processes and services in support of the partnerships' overarching objectives. Third, sophisticated contracting provides the basis for the deployment of monitoring mechanisms and other technical tools aimed at assessing the intermediate progress of project activities, thus creating the space for adaptation to shocks and changing contexts.

3. Are the results consistent with the initial hypotheses?

As this project's stated objective is that of opening a new research agenda to explore the effectiveness of sustainability partnerships, it should be noted that our research has an important focus on theory generation, rather than just theory testing. It is for this reason, for example, that a major component of the research plan consisted in the development of a new conceptual framework to capture multiple

dimensions of, and pathways to, partnership effectiveness. For the same reason, our initial proposition about the influence of partnership structuring on variable effectiveness were themselves reformulated and expanded (from three to four) as a consequence of collaborative discussions and additional literature reviews conducted by the research group.

That said, our empirical findings do provide support to the project's hypotheses and confirm the relevance of our conceptual framework, while simultaneously suggesting important nuances that may help guide future research. First, the findings are consistent with the notion that assessing partnerships only through the lenses of goal-attainment and value creation represents an inadequate approach to capture their overall effectiveness, as impacts on affected populations and macro-level impacts on governance systems appear to be the leading pathways to problem-solving for sustainability. In particular, these results suggest the importance of considering the interaction between partnership activities and domestic institutions, as well as the role of a partnership in stimulating learning, raising capacity and fostering trust outside the partnership itself, as crucial dimensions in the assessment of partnership effectiveness.

Secondly, the findings also support our hypotheses about sophisticated contracting, credible commitment of resources, adaptability and innovation being important conditions that may influence variable effectiveness. At the same time, our case studies also reveal that these conditions may interact through positive or feedback loops, rather than just operate independently from each other, and that sophisticated contracting may in certain cases represent a core driver of the other three. Finally, the findings suggest the need for a greater focus on contextual and political conditions as 'external' explanatory factors for partnership effectiveness which may limit the replicability and transferability of successful initiatives.

4. Practical application of results

The project's results can represent an important source of knowledge for academics and practitioners interested in understanding more about the real-world sustainability effects of partnerships and the causal pathways through which such effects can be achieved or undermined.

First, the project's elaboration of a new framework for analysing partnership effectiveness, the diversity of its methodological approaches and its interdisciplinary perspective on the question of partnership effectiveness all respond to pressing scientific questions that have been advanced in the scholarship on partnerships and transnational governance. In particular, they represent a valuable contribution for a wide audience of researchers and practitioners who are interested in developing new ways of comprehensively measuring and monitoring the sustainability impacts of transnational governance initiatives, with an emphasis on issue areas such as biodiversity, climate and energy, global health, children's rights, and natural resource management.

Secondly, the results have broad appeal for international policy and practice, given the centrality of partnerships in current debates on global and transnational governance, as well as the growing attention to the broader issue of governance effectiveness in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. After the launch of its 'Partnerships for SDGs' platform, which gathers multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments aimed at achieving the SDGs, the United Nations has focused on the creation of an enabling environment for partnerships that includes reviewing existing experiences, disseminating best practices, providing necessary training to public officials and building partnership skills and competences. Accordingly, the comparative insights and policy implications of the project (e.g. in terms of partnership design, evaluation and reform) are likely to be relevant for practitioners and private actors who engage in transnational networks and collaborative partnerships for sustainable development in different countries and in international organizations.

Finally, the main publication arising from the project, the volume on *Partnerships for Sustainability: Pathways to Effectiveness*, will hopefully provide an important teaching tool in the fields of international relations, development studies, environmental studies, business administration, public policy and other high-level interdisciplinary programs focusing on global politics, global governance and sustainable development issues.

5. Areas for further research

In addition to its empirical findings, this research project explicitly sought to advance a new research agenda based on an interdisciplinary assessment of multi-stakeholder partnerships' effectiveness in advancing global sustainable development. Accordingly, the project's development of a broadly-applicable conceptual framework and its theorisation of a series of conditions for variable effectiveness should represent ideal first steps to expand such an agenda in at least three directions.

First, it would be possible to apply our conceptual framework to new case studies in different thematic sectors, geographical contexts and governance levels, in order to capture the full spectrum of multi-stakeholder arrangements that have been created to support the implementation of the SDGs and develop additional comparative insights about the variable effectiveness of partnerships across issue areas. These could entail, for example, partnerships in the area of education (for which a NORRAG Special Issue is already being planned, see *Section 7.2*), sustainable consumption and production, gender, sustainable cities, environmental technologies.

Secondly, new theories about the conditions for variable effectiveness could be generated and tested beyond those relating to partnership structuring, which this project focuses on. For example, future research could more analytically explore the interplay of partnership effectiveness with aspects such as power dynamics, existing legal frameworks, and political systems, which in our case studies are rather dealt with as contextual factors which can offer alternative explanations for variable partnership outcomes.

Finally, a potential next step for the project could consist in the further development of our conceptual framework and dataset on partnership effectiveness. With respect to this second aspect, the findings from all present and future case studies conducted through the project's framework could be organised in a dedicated database, in order to facilitate access to, and understanding of, relevant success factors and lessons learnt. At the same time, the conceptual framework could be used as a starting point to support the definition of a series of quantitative indicators for partnership effectiveness, or even that of a composite index, by expanding the project's methodological approach and leveraging new contributions from policy analysts and data scientists.

6. Practical and policy recommendations

We believe that there are important policy-relevant lessons to be learnt from our study of possible pathways to, and conditions for, partnership effectiveness.

To begin with, our disaggregated framework to study different pathways to effectiveness can offer useful guidance for policy analysis and project evaluation, as it explicitly recommends partnership practitioners to investigate multiple dimensions of effectiveness and to consider the possibility of interactive effects among different pathways in both a positive and negative sense. As over 5200 partnerships initiatives and voluntary commitments have been already registered as part of the United Nations' *Partnerships for the SDGs* platform, the conceptual framework elaborated by the project could serve as the basis of a new policy tool for assessing partnership effects from an early phase, and along the dimensions that are most appropriate for each specific initiative.

Secondly, our research provides overall consistent evidence on the importance of certain characteristics of the structuring of partnerships, including sophisticated contracting, credible

commitment of resources, and adaptability, that are likely to work together if partnerships effectiveness is to be achieved and sustained. In suggesting that lack of partnership effectiveness may be a direct consequence of inefficient partnering processes, the findings of the project thus have direct implications for practitioners that are setting up and designing new partnership initiatives, or those grappling with the need to rethink a particular partnership approach. For example, practitioners from international organisations may want to use governance arrangements that help sustain the domestic ownership of partnerships over time, such as financing mechanisms that anticipate (and prepare for) a full transition to public financing, capacity-building of local administrators and bureaucracies, and mechanisms for the participation of affected communities and civil society in decision-making.

Thirdly, our research suggests that existing monitoring and evaluation of partnership outcomes tend to fall short of addressing the link between such outcomes and the ultimate contribution of the partnership to problem-solving for the SDGs. The factors that are usually monitored and measured tend to address one specific dimension of effectiveness, which generally concerns nominal goal-attainment or creation of value for the partners. By contrast, the two areas where high-quality data is often limited are those relating to the effects of partnerships on affected populations and to their spill-over effects on other initiatives and broader governance dynamics, both of which we regard as key dimensions of effectiveness. On the one hand, this warrants further effort by partnerships that have been implemented or those in the implementation and design phases to take these important aspects more explicitly into consideration. For example, the promotion of local livelihoods and socio-economic components should be incorporated in all partnership strategies as a key driver of effectiveness, rather than as a complementary target. On the other hand, it calls for the development of innovative monitoring frameworks in which more fine-grained qualitative data is collected alongside the traditional reporting of project outcomes, in order to better measure effects of partnerships at the micro- and macro-levels.

7. Past and expected publications and other activities

7.1. Publications (in chronological order)

1. Andonova, L.B., Faul, M.V., and Piselli, D. eds. 2021, forthcoming. *Partnerships for Sustainability: Pathways to Effectiveness*. Routledge: London (under contract).

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Conclusion

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2. Faul, M.V., and Tchilingirian, J. 2021. Structuring the interstitial space of global financing partnerships for sustainable development: A network analysis. *New Political Economy*, Online First, DOI: [10.1080/13563467.2020.1849082](https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2020.1849082).
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4. Andonova, L.B., and Piselli, D. 2021, forthcoming. Transnational Partnerships, Domestic Institutions, and Sustainable Development. *World Development* (under peer review).
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7.2. Other expected publications

1. An econometric paper that builds upon the research activity of Prof Carbonnier and Ms Fraser (provisional title: 'Sovereign debt stability and the effectiveness of transnational governance regimes') has been submitted to the journal *Environment and Development Economics* in May 2020 and is currently under review.
2. A report for practitioners will be published by Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center. It will describe the attributes for partnership success and reasons for partnership failure, drawing on the analysis of the Roy Family Award database.
3. The Belfer Center also plans to publish a full case study of the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project (NKMCA), which was part of its analysis of the Roy Family Award database.
4. A paper on 'Partnership Research: a Cross-Disciplinary Bibliometric Analysis', by Dr Faul, Prof Andonova and Bart Sebastian Gabriel (Graduate Institute of Geneva), will be submitted for peer-review over the coming weeks.

5. A NORRAG (Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training) Special Issue is planned that will apply the analytical framework and propositions arising from this research project to partnerships in education, a sector that was not addressed in the edited volume.

7.3. Dissemination activities and conference presentations (in chronological order)

1. ‘Are global partnerships effective in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals?’ 2020. Final Public Event of the *Effectiveness of Partnerships* Project, 16 November, Geneva, Switzerland (hosted online by the Centre for International Environmental Studies).

Presentations:

- 1a. Andonova, L.B. Analytical framework.
 - 1b. Piselli, D. Governing biodiversity and clean energy with global partners.
 - 1c. Michaelowa, A. International carbon markets as public-private partnerships for greenhouse gas mitigation.
2. Andonova, L.B., and Piselli, D. 2020. Governing biodiversity and clean energy with global partners. Paper presented at the 2020 SVPW/ASSP Annual Conference, 3-4 February, Lucerne, Switzerland.
 3. Fraser, J.M. 2020. Sovereign debt stability and the effectiveness of transnational governance regimes. Paper Presented at the 2020 SVPW/ASSP Annual Conference, 3-4 February, Lucerne, Switzerland.
 4. Andonova, L.B. 2019. The World Bank, policy networks, and partnership institutions for climate finance. Invited keynote speech at the University of Bern, November, Bern, Switzerland.
 5. Fraser, J.M. 2020. Sovereign debt stability and the effectiveness of transnational governance regimes. Paper Presented at a CIES Research Seminar, 14 November, Geneva, Switzerland.
 6. Faul, M.V., and Andonova, L.B. 2019. The effectiveness of informal organisations: how can we learn more? Paper presented at the 2019 European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions, 8-12 April, Mons, Belgium.
 7. Andonova, L.B., and Piselli, D. 2019. Effectiveness of partnerships: evidence from biodiversity and clean energy. Paper Presented at a CIES Research Seminar, 7 March, Geneva, Switzerland.
 8. Michaelowa, A. 2019. The World Bank’s rule in International Carbon Finance – agenda setter or regime follower? Paper presented at SPSA Annual Conference & Dreiländertagung, 14-16 February, Zurich, Switzerland.
 9. Faul, M.V. 2019. Structuring the space of global financing partnerships for sustainable development: A network analysis. Paper presented at the Inaugural Lecture of the Global Development Centre’s Seminar Series at Manchester University, January, Manchester, UK.
 10. Faul, M.V., and Boulanguem, Y. 2018. Beyond factional groups: faultlines within public and private sectors in global financing partnership boards. Paper presented at a Global Health Centre Research Seminar, December, Geneva, Switzerland.
 11. Michaelowa, A., Shishlov, I., and Brescia, D. Evolution of the international regulatory regime and “ecosystem” of international carbon market mechanisms since the late 1990s. 2018. Paper presented at the 2018 Utrecht Conference on Earth System Governance, 5-8 November, Utrecht, The Netherlands.
 12. Andonova, L.B. 2018. How the Rise of Public-Private Partnerships is Changing International Governance. Presentation and discussion co-hosted by the United Nations Foundation, the Swiss

Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and the IHEID Alumnae Association New York Chapter, September, New York. NY, United States.

13. Andonova, L.B. 2018. How the Rise of Public-Private Partnerships is Changing International Governance. Invited presentation and discussion at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, September, Boston, MA, United States.

14. 'Global Public-Private Partnerships and Power'. 2018. Panel organized by Liliana B. Andonova and Moira V. Faul at the 59th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA), 4-7 April, San Francisco, CA, United States.

Presentations:

14a. Andonova, L.B. 2018. The power of the public purse: financing and agenda setting in Global Health partnerships.

14b. Faul, M.V. 2018. Power and multistakeholderism: the structuring of spaces between fields.

15. Stadler, L., and Karakulak, Ö. 2018. Scrutinizing cross-sector partnerships: laboratories and mass marketers of innovative solutions? Paper presented at Harvard University's Rethinking Cross-Sector Social Innovation Conference, 6-7 April, Cambridge, MA., United States.

Internal Report

1. Coherence of project activities with initial timeline

As outlined in both our intermediate report and the requests of extension submitted to SNIS in February 2019, December 2019 and March 2020, the original work plan experienced a number of modifications, which we believe were physiological for a project of this kind and duration. The modifications mainly resulted from the first project extension, which postponed the end of our data collection and analysis phase from December 2018 to September 2019. This timeline change was made necessary by, *inter alia*: (i) an initial delay in the recruitment of a research assistant for the Graduate Institute-hosted strand of the project; (ii) certain methodological difficulties encountered by the various research groups (including both principal and associated members), which prompted small adjustments including at the level of research design, selection of case studies, and analysis methods.

The second extension request was made necessary by the re-scheduling of the second internal workshop (from an initial targeted period of May-June 2019 to October 2019), a decision that was itself a consequence of the above-mentioned delays in data collection and analysis. In turn, hosting the second workshop in October 2019 required the core research team to move the third internal workshop to March 2020, in order to give them enough time to provide feedback to the authors of the main draft papers, properly organise the final public event and start the preparations of the book publication proposal.

Lastly, the third extension request was a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented the core research team from hosting the planned public event in March 2020 and delayed the submission of the final drafts of the main papers (while the third internal workshop was moved online and took place as agreed on 19-20 March, not all of the papers had been received by that date). Thanks to the granted extension, the core research team was able to re-schedule the public event for 16 November 2020 and used the additional months to submit its volume proposal to Routledge and continue its work on the final manuscript.

All requests of extension came at no additional cost to SNIS, as they rather entailed the temporal extension of the original budget lines or the internal rearrangement of some funds across such lines (e.g. part of the travel budget used to retain Mr Dario Piselli as the CIES' research assistant, part of the discretionary budget used to support Open Access for the project's edited volume).

2. Project activities undertaken to use the information gathered and communicate the results (excluding peer-reviewed publications)

From the outset, the project sought to place a strong emphasis on the dissemination of the research results within the international Geneva community, as well as to ensure the practical relevance of such results through constant attempts to receive feedback and comments from experts and practitioners.

First, the news coverage provided by the official pages of the Graduate Institute and the CIES (e.g. see the coverage of our [second internal workshop](#) and [final public event](#)) has been complemented by a dedicated website that was set up explicitly for the project. The website can be visited at <http://www.effectivenessofpartnerships.org>, and it will continue to be updated beyond the formal end of the research project to reflect future project-related news, publications and events. Some of the academic partners also created additional web pages to disseminate the results of specific research strands, such as the evaluation of the database of the Roy Family Award for Environmental

Partnerships (see <https://www.belfercenter.org/program/environment-and-natural-resources#!measuring-partnership-effectiveness>).

Secondly, the various research groups were encouraged to present their draft papers and receive feedback during various international conferences and research seminars, including the 2020 Annual Conference of the Swiss Political Science Association (SVPW/ASSP), the 2019 ECPR Joint Sessions; the 2018 Annual Conference of the International Studies Association (ISA), the 2018 Utrecht Conference on Earth System Governance, and several IHEID Research Seminars.

Finally, the project's results have been used to develop and communicate policy recommendations within the International Geneva community and to other relevant organizations. The most important outreach activity, in this respect, consisted of the final public event of the project, which was hosted online by the Centre for International Environmental Studies on 16 November 2020. This event had originally been planned as an in-person event on 19 March 2020 but had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After exploring the possibility of rescheduling it as a hybrid event, the CIES moved the event fully online in October 2020 to comply with the new COVID-19 policy of the Graduate Institute of Geneva. The event sought to present the project's findings and evaluate them against the first-person experience and feedback of leading practitioners from the international Geneva community, in order to develop tailored policy recommendations for partnership creation and updating. Among the speakers were Mr Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions; Mr Juan Coderque, Head of the New Financing Models Unit of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Prof Gilbert Probst, Chairman of the Board of the Banque Cantonale de Genève. The event drew an audience of 110 participants from across the globe, including about 20 practitioners from UNDP, IFRC, WMO, Global Gas Centre (GGC), the Development Bank of Minas Gerais (BDMG) and various diplomatic missions.

Even beyond the final public event, however, several members of the research team have been focused on policy-relevant outreach and dissemination activities. For example, the researchers at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center are preparing to publish a report for practitioners that will describe the attributes for partnership success and reasons for partnership failure, drawing on the analysis of the Roy Family Award database and on the wider project's findings. In addition, the project team has been recently invited by the World Resources Institute to provide their inputs and policy recommendations to the report '[*A Time for Transformative Partnerships: How Multistakeholder Partnerships Can Accelerate the U.N. Sustainable Development Goal*](#)', with a view to informing the work of the P4G Initiative (Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030). As part of this invitation, Mr Dario Piselli has also acted as an external reviewer and participated in the launch event of the report.

3. Participation of partners

As discussed in our intermediate report to SNIS, the core project team at the Graduate of Geneva (including Prof Liliana Andonova, Prof Gilles Carbonnier, Mr Dario Piselli and Ms Jamie Fraser) has maintained a close collaboration with the other project members, frequently coordinating with them to support or assist in their respective work on data collection, analysis and review. In turn, all the partners remained sufficiently engaged throughout the project's implementation, generally respecting submission deadlines and contributing actively to the theoretical and empirical phases of the research.

The three partners workshops organized as part of the project have certainly played a role in this process, helping the core team in ensuring the consistency of the different research efforts. More specifically, the first workshop (convened on 4 December 2017 at the Graduate Institute of Geneva) was used to develop a coordinated research design and to ensure that the collected data could be shared among the project partners. The workshop resulted in a series of common definitions on the key research concepts (e.g. 'partnerships', 'effectiveness'), as well as in the preliminary

conceptualization of the analytical framework to be used by the project partners (i.e. see Section 3). In addition, the workshop was also attended by associated members Dr Susan Bissell (via Skype) and Prof Thomas Hale, who are not directly involved in the project's research outputs but nonetheless provided valuable inputs to the discussion and continue to share useful resources and experiences with the research teams (see for example the recent [ClimateSouth report](#), co-authored by Dr Hale, on the global performance of 127 partnerships at the level of sub-state and non-state actors registered under the UN Climate Change Action Portal).

The second workshop took place in Florence (Italy) on 7-8 October 2019. The workshop represented the second milestone in the collaboration between the project partners, and it was an important opportunity for information sharing, peer learning and review, and participatory decision-making. In particular, the meeting allowed the project partners to: (i) present their main draft papers; (ii) review each other's methodology and findings; (iii) collectively assess the project's framework against the cumulative insights on the different dimensions of partnership effectiveness for sustainability and the core explanatory factors that appeared consistent across the draft papers; and (iv) agree on a list of potential outputs for the research project.

Third, the final workshop, which took place online on 19-20 March 2020, served to keep the project partners engaged during the final phase of the project and further strengthen the mutual learning and peer review component of the research. Throughout the workshop's sessions, the project partners were once again asked to offer suggestions and comments on each other's papers, as well as encouraged to tighten the alignment of their work with the overall analytical framework whenever necessary. The meeting was also necessary to reach a definitive decision on the project's publication options, featuring a collective discussion that helped achieve strong consensus within the project team.

Lastly, in addition to the original group of associated project members, the core research team was also able to develop new collaborations with other researchers working on sustainability partnerships at the Graduate Institute or in other institutions. In particular, the team was able to bring in external expertise in the area of global health, with a focus on the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (Dr Mara Pillinger from Georgetown University) and on product-development partnerships for medicines and vaccines (Prof Suerie Moon and Ms Marcela Vieira from the Global Health Centre of the Graduate Institute of Geneva). The contributions of these researchers were incorporated as chapters in the final edited volume of the project.

4. Storage of the research results

The results of the research project will be stored in digital form on the centralized file storage system of the Centre for International Environmental Studies in Geneva and in a Dropbox folder which is currently shared by the core research team and the project partners. Outside of the research team, we will continue to ensure the anonymity of those who participated in field interviews by removing any reference that could lead to their identification in all documents destined for publication or public dissemination, unless this was explicitly allowed by the interviewee himself/herself.

5. Possibilities offered by SNIS support

Throughout the duration of the project, SNIS support was crucial for building an inter-disciplinary team, a solid analytical framework, and a series of extensive research activities to advance the study of partnership effectiveness. It has helped the CIES direct sufficient funds and staff time towards all the phases of the research and thereby ensured the delivery and quality of all project activities. In particular, the funds disbursed by SNIS made it possible for the CIES to retain the services of the principal research assistant, Mr Dario Piselli, throughout the duration of the project, as well as to

support a second research assistant, Ms Jamie Fraser, from November 2017 to April 2018. Thanks to SNIS funding, Mr Piselli could contribute his time to refining the project's methodology, the collection and analysis of the data, and the organisation of project meetings, events, and reporting activities. For her part, Ms Fraser worked with Prof Carbonnier on data collection and analysis and drafted the publications relating to their research on the impact of partnerships on the transparency of natural resource revenue management.

In addition, SNIS helped cover the costs of three partners workshops and of the final public event, thereby facilitating the coordination of the various research streams, allowing the research methodology to be constantly refined through collaborative efforts, and promoting the dissemination of the findings within the international Geneva community. Third, the support provided by SNIS was instrumental in reaching an agreement with publishers on the Open Access publication of the project's final edited volume, together with some additional financial support provided by the team at the Kennedy School of Harvard University. Finally, SNIS' flexibility in the reallocation of funding and budget lines was necessary to respond to changes in the project timeline and to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to mitigate the impact that the pandemic had on the finalisation of research activities and on the organisation of public events.

6. Implications of the project's interdisciplinary nature

The first important implication of the interdisciplinary nature of the project is that it helped shape our research methodology and results in a highly innovative way. From the outset, our proposal to SNIS had highlighted the need for studies of partnership effectiveness to be based on more integrated approaches and complementary methodologies from different disciplines. A priority of the research team was thus the development of a conceptual framework that could fill this gap. Our approach brought together insights and methods coming from business administration, international relations, anthropology, development studies, economic assessments and critical political economy perspectives, therefore allowing the research team to use a broad spectrum of different data sources and analytical tools. In turn, this interdisciplinary focus made it possible to capture a rich and nuanced set of findings, something which would have not been feasible had the team only focused on a narrow understanding of partnership effectiveness. For example, our project clearly shows that assessing partnerships solely through the lenses of value creation, efficiency and goal-attainment could misrepresent the impacts that such partnerships may have on stakeholders who are not partners but nevertheless remain fundamental for solving complex sustainable development problems, including local populations and institutions in wider governance systems. In addition, our approach facilitated the study of partnership impacts at different levels of governance, allowing the research team to unpack local-level effects that would be neglected if the analysis was squarely centred on transnational actors and institutions. Finally, the complementary use of methods drawn from organization and business management studies (such as faultline analysis) provided an opportunity to zoom in on the internal workings of partnership bodies, such as governing boards, which would have otherwise eluded a traditional exploration of institutional dynamics.

The second implication of the project's interdisciplinary nature is a consequence of the first one, and it consists of the broad appeal that its insights and policy recommendations may have for different constituencies and issue areas. On the one hand, scholars from a wide range of disciplines, with an emphasis on business administration, global governance, international law and public policy may wish to engage with our findings or further develop our conceptual framework to explore new issue areas and aspects of partnership effectiveness. On the other hand, practitioners representing different categories of stakeholders may use our suggestions to broaden their understanding of how value and impacts are created through partnerships, in order to design more inclusive partnership structures and processes and therefore leverage the motivations and comparative advantages of different partners.

7. Potential follow-up to the project

The research outputs are not intended to be completed with the end date of the project, as the core research team will continue to ensure a high quality of the publications and of additional dissemination and collaboration opportunities linked to the research topic.

First, the edited volume on *Partnerships for Sustainability: Pathways to Effectiveness* will be published in 2021, providing the team with an opportunity to further disseminate the project's findings and their policy implications (e.g. through interviews, articles, blog posts, and events celebrating or building upon the milestone). The same efforts will be dedicated to all supplementary publications and showcased on the website of the project, as well as on CIES website.

Secondly, several research teams have planned additional activities that will facilitate outreach to practitioners. For example, the team based at the Harvard Kenney School intends to develop a partnership toolkit to leverage the results and lessons learned from the case studies contained in the Roy Family Award database, including recommendations for the design and management of partnership initiatives. Mr Piselli will also continue to provide policy-relevant inputs arising from the project to inform the P4G initiative of the World Resources Institute.

Lastly, the attention on the issues highlighted in the project could be maintained through future dissemination events organised by the CIES, the participation of core team members to relevant initiatives organised by third parties, or even further research efforts (see the suggestions offered in Section 5 of the *Executive Summary*), in order to ensure that our insights and recommendations can continue to inform scholarly research as well as the partnership-related activities of international organisations.

8. Potential for application of research results

The project has produced a cross-disciplinary, integrated and comparative framework that will arguably contribute to both scientific debates on global governance and practical progress in the creation and design of partnerships for sustainable development.

More specifically, by bringing together knowledge of different epistemic communities, exploring pathways to partnership effectiveness and failure, and describing the implications of these pathways for the achievement of the SDGs, the project's framework has the potential to generate policy-relevant thinking about how partnerships can be designed and implemented in ways that are likely to produce value and impacts, as well as to strengthen the process of collaboration, implementation and monitoring of the partners' commitments. Our results could for example feed into the capacity-building activities and knowledge-exchange initiatives conducted as part of the United Nations 'Partnerships for SDGs' platform and its 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator, which aim to create an enabling environment for sustainable development partnerships by training public officials and disseminating best practices.

In addition, the different research efforts of the project team will arguably shed light on topics that present further practical interest for specific audiences. For example, the work hosted by the CIES will provide specific insights relating to the challenge of delivering social-economic co-benefits under biodiversity and clean energy partnerships, whereas the research on international carbon market mechanisms will help understand how different technical regulations for these mechanisms can influence their effectiveness. These findings are likely to be applied by practitioners who engage in transnational networks and partnerships in different countries, international organisations and non-State actors. The analytical framework can also be adapted for policy purposes to inform new and innovative tools for assessing the effectiveness of public-private partnerships and their contribution to the SDGs agenda.

Finally, because the results will be disseminated through the final edited volume of the project, they will provide a useful resource in the classroom and for a broad audience of scholars and researchers. In this form, the results will be particularly relevant for those focusing on the organizational structure of the multilateral system, on the dynamics and effectiveness of transnational governance regimes (including public-private partnerships), on public policy and business administration, as well as broadly on sustainable development studies and institutions of global governance.

Working Paper

The following working paper serves to present the project's analytical framework and illustrate how it has been applied to real-life partnerships in order to develop empirical findings. Importantly, the paper does not capture all the research strands that have been discussed in this final report. This working paper is submitted for reporting and evaluation purposes, we would be able to submit a version of this working paper for the SNIS website in January 2021. Since this work is under contract as a forthcoming Open Access publication, we shall be grateful if the paper is not distributed beyond the SNIS reporting and evaluation process until we submit the website version in January 2021.

Effectiveness of global partnerships: evidence from biodiversity and clean energy

Liliana B. Andonova, Dario Piselli, Moira V. Faul

1. Introduction

As the challenges facing the global community become more complex and interdependent, transnational partnerships between public and non-State actors have gained momentum as an essential element of governance across multiple scales and levels (Andonova 2017; Hale and Held 2011). The rise of partnerships has been particularly driven by their anticipated effects on overcoming collective action failures at a time of accelerating transformations in the Earth System (Steffen et al. 2015), pushing back against what is widely perceived as a growing retreat of multilateralism (Hale, Held and Young 2013, 2017). Ever since the endorsement of partnerships among the official outcomes of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (hereinafter, the Earth Summit), this form of transnational governance firmly lies at the centre of global efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure human health and well-being, and fight climate change and environmental degradation (Andonova 2014). As a result, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development now emphasizes the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships as a key means of implementation of its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN 2015a), and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development also identifies them as important tools to complement the action of governments in the mobilization and dissemination of knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources (UN 2015b).

During this period, the emergence of transnational partnerships in the areas of biodiversity and clean energy has represented an important dimension of the broader trend towards the global rise of this form of governance. Among the initiatives registered at the Earth Summit, more than 19 percent targeted policy issues relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (e.g. terrestrial species and ecosystems; oceans, lakes and rivers; forest management), while an additional 13.9 percent focused on clean energy objectives (Chan and Müller 2012). Most recently, nearly half of the partnerships and voluntary commitments submitted to the 'Partnerships for SDGs' online platform covered terrestrial or aquatic biodiversity aspects as part of their strategy, and 12.5 percent contained clean energy commitments.¹ These may range from local, project-level endeavours (e.g. a public-private partnership to fund and manage a new energy infrastructure, specific ecosystem conservation and restoration projects) to large multi-stakeholder initiatives seeking to complement the efforts of governments through the mobilisation of significant amounts of funding, knowledge, technology and expertise (e.g. global financing mechanisms that support the creation of protected areas or the upscaling of off-grid energy services in rural communities).

The growing role of partnerships in biodiversity and clean energy governance can be explained by several concurring factors, including increased scientific understanding of the biosphere and climate sub-systems' centrality to Earth System functioning (Stafford-Smith et al. 2017; Steffen et al. 2015);

¹ See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdinaction/pd4sdgs/partnerships> (accessed 2 March 2020).

the particular importance of multi-level and/or multi-sector collaboration for the implementation of the respective international legal frameworks (Visseren-Hamakers, Leroy and Glasbergen 2012, Chan and Müller 2012); the funding and capacity gaps that often beset effective domestic action in these areas (Andonova 2014; Campe 2014); and the specific interests and development cooperation priorities of powerful actors in the Global North (Andonova 2014, 2017).

As with the other issue areas targeted by the 2030 Agenda, however, we still have limited knowledge of the impacts of existing initiatives on biodiversity and clean energy and the related conditions for effectiveness. In contrast with the numerous academic debates on the purpose, significance and legitimacy of partnerships, the general body of scholarship dealing with questions of effectiveness lacks systematic studies that focus on both (a) an evaluation of the actual impacts of partnerships, and (b) an analysis of the causal mechanisms through which these impacts are brought about. Existing literature often adopts descriptive statistics of partnership activities rather than outcomes or impacts (Chan et al. 2018; Pattberg 2012), makes use of institutional design features to infer *potential* effectiveness (Michaelowa and Michaelowa 2017), or struggles to identify relevant counterfactuals when analysis individual case studies (Beisheim and Liese 2014). Of the few studies that have been specifically conducted on topics of biodiversity and clean energy, most have assessed partnerships against a set of proposed governance functions rather than actual sustainable development outcomes (Visseren-Hamakers, Leroy and Glasbergen 2012; Szulecki, Pattberg and Biermann 2012; Campe 2014), and the lack of a broadly applicable methodology for understanding their variable pathways and effects remains glaring.

In this paper, we thus aim to explore the question of partnership effectiveness by applying the analytical framework developed by Andonova and Faul (2021, forthcoming) to three case studies in the areas of biodiversity and clean energy. Two of these initiatives, namely Brazil's Amazon Region Protected Areas (ARPA) Programme and Costa Rica's Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (INBio), were launched with the aim of promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, but also present wider considerations relating to climate change and creation of socio-economic opportunities for local communities. The third, Ecuador's San Cristóbal Wind Park project, had the objective of reducing the Galápagos Islands' dependence on imported fossil fuels while simultaneously (a) protecting the region's fragile marine ecosystem from the risk of oil spills; and (b) contributing towards the transition toward cleaner energy sources. Taken together, the case studies provide significant insights about the mechanisms through which partnerships in the areas of biodiversity and clean energy may exert behavioural influence on the partners, as well as about the key factors shaping variable partnership effectiveness. Accordingly, they also allow us to discuss a series of implications and opportunities for the design of future sustainability partnerships.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces our conceptualisation of partnership effectiveness and reviews the gaps of existing approaches that have been used in the literature to analyse it. In addition, it describes four conditions related to partnership structuring that are likely to be necessary for greater effectiveness across different types of partnerships. Section 3 discusses the methodology of the paper, summarizing the key characteristics of the three case studies, the rationale for using them in our comparative analysis, and the relevant data sources. Section 4 briefly presents our findings on the effectiveness of the three partnerships, trying to identify common patterns in terms of improved collaboration, creation of value for partners, and wider sustainable development impacts. Section 5 presents and discusses the findings of the paper against four conditions that we propose as particularly relevant for explaining the variable effectiveness of partnerships. Section 6 provides a conclusion.

2. Pathways to, and conditions of, partnership effectiveness

2.1. Pathways to partnership effectiveness

In this paper, we define effectiveness as *the contribution of partnerships to problem-solving and sustainability, through a set of pathways that affect actors and their collective capacity to advance relevant objectives and public purpose.*

Our conceptualization of effectiveness starts with the premise that the effectiveness of governance instruments is ultimately judged by the extent to which they address or contribute to solving the specific problems that are the subject of governance. The problem-solving premise is indeed also at the heart of substantial existing literature on the effectiveness of formal international institutions and environmental regimes (Keohane 1996; Victor, Raustiala and Skolnikoff 1998; and Young 1999, 2011). However, this literature on institutional effectiveness is also quick to point that the ‘problem-solving’ effects of governance regimes are often difficult to discern empirically and that, in addition, they may be difficult to disentangle from those of other related institutions, as well as from exogenous factors such as economic development, pre-existing policies, or social capital. It is because of such considerations, that our definition of partnership effectiveness includes five intermediate pathways through which partnerships may affect actors and its contribution to creating different capacities for addressing a set of sustainability issues (Clark and Harley 2020). To specify these pathways, we draw on several strands of scholarship that examine either broadly the effects of institutions or more concretely the micro-level impacts and added value produced by specific partnership initiatives (Andonova and Faul 2021, forthcoming). The field of international relations boasts an extensive literature on the causal pathways and behavioural mechanisms through which international regimes influence collaborative outcomes (Haas, Keohane and Levy 1993; Mitchell 1994; Young 2011, among others).

Goal attainment

At the most fundamental level, partnership effectiveness can be measured in terms of the extent to which the partnership itself has been implemented and achieved its formally identified goals. Although such assessment may appear trivial, its importance cannot be overlooked. At the 2002 Earth Summit, over 200 partnerships were adopted for the first time as an official outcome of an intergovernmental summit. This was intended, according to the conveners of the initiative, to promote the implementation of global sustainability goals (Andonova and Levy 2003). Research has shown, however, that 49% of a sample of Earth Summit initiatives were either never implemented or performed poorly with respect to their goals (Pattberg et al. 2012; Biermann and Pattberg 2012). In their analysis, Pattberg et al. (2012) estimated that a large share of their sample simply lacked the commitment of resources and other instruments likely to be necessary to achieve their goals. Furthermore, there is often a mismatch between stated partnership objectives and partnership outcomes (Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). More recently, the United Nations Partnerships for the SDGs platform records that merely 301 of the 5,086 initiatives registered (some of which are defined as ‘voluntary commitments’ rather than actual partnerships) are on track to reach their objectives, with other 247 now completed.²

Public policy and business administration studies evaluate effective goal attainment by partnerships against the counterfactual of their added value, compared to pre-existing approaches or what partners could have achieved by themselves (van Tulder et al. 2016; Austin and Seitanidi 2014; Waddock 1988). Goal attainment is thus a foundational aspect of partnership effectiveness. However, the validity of ‘goal-attainment’ approaches to assessing the effectiveness of formal or informal institutions is nonetheless contingent on a series of counterfactuals (Bernauer 1995; Gutner and

² See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/> (accessed 13 September 2020).

Thompson 2010; Haas, Keohane and Levy 1993; Mitchell 2006; Young and Levy 1999). The analysis needs to establish if certain goals are achieved as a consequence of the activities implemented by the partnership, rather than by exogenous factors such as changes in market prices, economic downturns or government policies. Other important counterfactuals to consider are how ambitious the stated goals are in the first place (Downs et al. 1996), the extent to which they challenge the status quo rather than adopting seemingly new but minimal, least-common denominator agreements (Berliner and Prakash 2012; Haas, Keohane and Levy 1993; Sethi, Prakash and Schepers 2014; van Tulder and Keen 2018), and whether they are actually aligned with the broader objectives of the global sustainable agenda (Horan 2019). Thus, a more rigorous conceptualization of effectiveness requires the specification of the mechanisms through which a partnership has affected the behaviour of actors and the outcomes of their collaboration (Young and Levy 1999; Haas, Keohane and Levy 2003; Miles et al. 2002; Chan et al. 2016).

Value for partners

Effective partnerships are also expected to create value for the partners (businesses, civil society organizations, and local, national or global public institutions) that are involved in them (see among others, Austin and Seitanidi 2012; Clarke, Macdonald and Ordonez-Ponce 2018; Seitanidi and Crane, 2014; Stadler and Probst, 2012; Porter and Kramer 2011; Stadler 2016). Such value is assumed to be additional to what each sector can achieve with its own resources and logics of action in order to justify the costs and changes that are intrinsic to partnering. The diversity of partners involved in cross-sector partnerships is considered to be an advantage for partnerships, yet tensions may surface between the different – and potentially contradictory – goals and interests of different partners, and also between conflicting demands of the partnership and those of the partners' home sectors (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Utting and Zammit 2009). What types of value may be created by a partnership and for whom? How do these types of expected value influence the motivation to engage in a partnership in the first place?³ These questions represent another integral aspect of partnership effectiveness and require more critical examination and the surfacing of paradoxical tensions as to what different partners may gain from the partnership, how they might value those gains, and how that value may relate to the stated partnership goal (Austin and Seitanidi 2012).

Collaboration inside the partnership

Intrinsic to partnerships are the partners who are brought together into these collaborative arrangements and how they work together. Nevertheless, not every actor that has a stake in the achievement of partnership goals can be intimately involved in the partnership itself. Therefore, effectiveness concerns are raised as to which actors are excluded from partnerships, as well as the reasons for those exclusions. Alford and Hughes (2008), for example, propose rational explanations, while Menashy (2018) and Harman (2016) advance analyses of power and Knutsson and Lindberg (2019) and Macgilchrist (2016) foreground the ways in which such power may be contested. Secondly, while claims continue to be made for the effectiveness of partnerships in redefining relationships between partners (Wessal and Wescott 2019), the complexity of collaborating across sectors is recognised by many researchers. Klijn and Teisman (2003) go so far as to argue that non-collaborative relationships are often typical of partnerships rather than being the exception, while Babiak and Thibault (2009) argue that relationships of competition (rather than collaboration) are characteristic of partnering. Critically, Caldwell, Roehrich and George (2017) find that relational coordination affects both internal performance and external value creation, and Maltin (2019)

³ With respect to the motivations of corporate actors, see for example Stadler and Lin 2017.

highlights that working relationship between partners and being forward about ‘unspoken interests’ makes partnership more adaptable to setbacks and ultimately more successful.

Many scholars argue that institutional design and participatory quality are both intrinsically linked to increased inclusion, perceived legitimacy, and effectiveness of partnerships (Andonova and Carbonnier 2014; Beisheim and Campe 2012; Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2004; Martinez-Diaz 2009). However, structure alone cannot account for more or less effective collaboration (Andonova and Levy 2003; Pattberg et al. 2012). Partners who are formally included in a partnership’s governance structure may be excluded from much of its decision-making in practice (Faul 2016; Dingwerth and Eichinger 2010). Thus, the interplay of the structuring of partnerships and the partners’ agency in partnership workings can shape the effectiveness of partnering (Brinkerhoff, 2002b; Casey, 2008; Mandell, 2001). Collaboration among partners is thus a pathway that produces important effects itself in terms of empowerment or disempowerment of actors, and the participatory quality and procedural legitimacy of the partnership (Backstrand 2006b; Bäckstrand and Kylsäter 2014; Bexell and Mörth 2010; Dingwerth 2005). It also has implications for other types of effects such the efficiency of achieving partnership goals and their durability (Maltin 2019.)

Impact on affected populations

The stated *raison d’être* of partnerships typically lies in leveraging resources and instruments that create value for partners and other target populations, by addressing sustainable development problems that a single authority or actor is unlikely to solve alone (Austin and Seitanidi 2012; Wessal and Wescott 2019). However, in solving one aspect of a sustainability problem, a partnership might exacerbate a different aspect, or it may influence the issue agenda in ways that privilege some solutions and constituencies over others. From this perspective, Cook, Smith and Utting (2012) draw attention to what they call the ‘triple injustice’ of environmental policies that can compound the existing double inequity suffered by populations who contribute the least to climate change but nonetheless tend to be the most vulnerable to its consequences (Füssel 2010). Thus, target populations can be involved in the co-production of the solutions that partnerships may provide, and yet are rarely or poorly represented in many partnerships’ governing bodies to influence the solutions that are prioritized (Andonova and Levy 2003; Faul 2016). Similarly, Barlow and Köberle-Gaiser (2008) argue that if health partnerships were to consult clinicians in the contracting phase, more innovative impacts would follow. More critically, Verger, Bonal, and Zancajo (2016) argue that education partnerships increasingly engage with target populations (families) only as consumers of education, not as concerned citizens or responsible parents.

The distributional implications of partnerships and extent to which they facilitate changes in actor behaviour and institutions to attain sustainability, is another significant determinant of effectiveness with respect to relevant constituencies (Young and Levy 1999; Haas, Keohane and Levy 1993; Stadler 2016). The effectiveness of partnerships should be investigated with respect to their benefits for target populations, the inclusion of target populations in solution design, and also the extent to which the target population is able to influence behavior and willingness to engage in new commitments on a specific issue (van der Ven, Bernstein and Hoffmann 2017). This is important because, for example, benefits for target populations may be in tension with the benefits that partners seek for themselves (Mukherjee and Reed 2009; Bäckstrand 2006a; Hawkes and Buse 2011; Austin and Seitanidi 2012).

Influence on collaboration and institutions external to the partnership

In addition to collaboration inside partnerships, researchers also examine cooperation between partnerships and other external actors, as well as the ways in which partnerships interact with other mechanisms and systems of governance. Partnerships are considered to transform the system of actors

around the issues they address (Andonova 2017; Trujillo 2018; Abbott and Snidal 2010), these external actors' issue framing (Allan 2017) and prioritization (Harman 2016), as well as their adoption of partnerships as a mode of governance or implementation (Robertson et al. 2012). Partnerships may also influence other governance mechanisms and cooperation processes in the wider ecosystem into which the partnership is introduced (Abbott, Green and Keohane 2016; Andonova 2017; 2018; Green and Keohane 2016; Biermann and Gupta 2011; Stone 2008; Forsyth 2003; Söderbaum 1999). A fundamental concern in global governance has to do with the extent to which voluntary transnational partnerships may codify least common denominator objectives that could crowd out more ambitious and binding instruments; or alternatively, if they may create a focal point and learning mechanism that can facilitate the brokerage of new formal institutions and agreements. Thus, Visseren-Hamakers, Arts and Glasbergen (2011) examine the interactions of partnerships with intergovernmental regimes in the area of conservation and biodiversity. Equally, Verger, Bonal and Zancajo (2016) argue that when education partnerships engage with families only as consumers of education, this influences the dynamics of public accountability (see also Forrer et al. 2010). In global health, a particularly poignant debate centres on the extent to which partnership bestow authority to powerful non-state actors and soft agreements, which may create split accountability with potential to weaken the authority of international institutions and formal government commitments (Burci 2009). Partnerships for sustainable development thus influence existing complex systems at the same time as they are affected by them.

Taken together, these five pathways capture our argument that both the direct goal-related outcomes of partnerships, as well as their behavioural influence on a variety of actors represent integral components of any analysis of their overall effects on problem-solving for sustainable development. Furthermore, our framework takes into account the fact that partnerships tend to focus on relatively narrow objectives, and therefore it may be difficult to neatly isolate their effects from that of other governance institutions and policies in which partnerships are embedded, or with which they coexist. Analysing the different and inter-related mechanisms that determine partnership effects thus allows us to document, and, to the extent possible, isolate the specific contribution (or lack thereof) of partnerships towards addressing sustainability challenges that are subject to complex governance landscapes.

2.2. Partnership structuring and its influence on effectiveness

In addition to providing a framework for a systematic comparative analysis of the degree to which partnership impacts have materialized, our conceptualization of effectiveness also allows us to attempt to identify a set of conditions that are likely to shape such effectiveness. However, because of the inherent diversity of partnerships in terms of size, goals, and embeddedness at different levels of governance, it is often difficult to control for, or to examine comprehensively, the variety external factors that can shape effectiveness. For this reason, we focus the inquiry on a set of conditions and characteristics that are internal to the structuring of partnerships, which may help explain why some are more likely to be effective and others are not. The analysis on conditions for effectiveness is exploratory in nature and theory-generating, rather than theory testing. Nonetheless, the objective is to illuminate important internal and generalizable conditions that shape partnership effectiveness. The following four propositions on the structuring of partnerships and conditions for their effectiveness draw insights from studies of collective action, institutional design, and existing research on cross-sector collaboration.

Proposition 1. Sophisticated contracting, in terms of establishing appropriate specificity of commitments and accountability mechanisms, is likely to increase the effectiveness of partnerships.

This proposition is somewhat counterintuitive, given that partnerships often rest on informal and limited contracts, at least at the time of their creation. Many global partnerships are launched by memoranda of understanding; some are even simply announced and registered as part of partnership platforms (Andonova and Levy 2003). As partnerships expand and become institutionalized, they may establish more formal agreements between the partners (Andonova 2017). Why is then contracting important for partnership success? We stipulate that the quality of contracting is important for the effectiveness of partnerships, precisely because of their informal and experimentalist nature as governance institutions. Research on collaboration for the provision of collective goods has shown that both formal and informal institutions are critical for establishing reciprocity, common expectations, and mechanisms to deal with implementation or with transgression without long-term damage to collaborative objectives (Axelrod 1984; Keohane 1984; Ostrom 1990). Moreover, the design features of institutional arrangements matter in how effectively they can advance governance functions (Mitchell 2002; Ostrom 1990; Young 2010). These qualities are particularly essential for informal agreements such as partnerships, which cannot rely on central or legalized authoritative enforcement mechanisms. We argue that in the context of voluntary agreements such as public-private partnerships, clearly specifying the joint objectives and level of partner engagement is thus important for creating common meanings and trust across sectors. Some degree of specificity in partnership commitments is furthermore necessary for clarifying the comparative advantages brought by different partners, and how they contribute to collective goals. By elaborating and clarifying commitments, partners are more likely to develop trust and common understandings across different sectors. The right degree of specificity of contractual arrangement is also likely to require soft but functional mechanisms of accountability to maintain trust and ensure implementation, while allowing for a degree of flexibility that is characteristic of experimentalist institutions (De Burca et al. 2014). Contractual specificity and accountability of partners is thus likely to be essential for pre-empting least-common denominator agreements, or the repackaging and greenwashing business as usual practices (Sethi, Prakash and Shepers 2014; Michelowa and Michaelowa 2017). Without these features an initiative may produce short-term reputational gains but limited long-term value either for the partners or for collaboration and society.

Proposition 2. Credible commitment of resources is likely to enhance partnership effectiveness.

This proposition appears obvious. Yet, the literature has noted a slew of registered partnership initiatives that have not committed the necessary resources or instruments for implementing stated goals or to have a substantive impact on problem-solving (Pattberg et al., 2012; Szulecki, Pattberg and Biermann, 2010). Commitment of resources is in many ways *the sine qua non* of partnership goal-attainment as an elementary measure of effectiveness. However, it is yet to be assessed or measured systematically in academic literature. Moreover, studies in business administration and public policy stipulate that one of the main rationales for partnerships is the ability to leverage complementary resources by partners, in order to make the advancement of a set of objectives possible or more efficient (Austin and Seitanidi 2014; Porter and Kramer 2011; Kaul and Conceicao 2005; Börzel and Risse 2005). For instance, in international relations, partnerships became a prominent feature of governance precisely around problems such as access to medical technologies, conservation of biodiversity, or clean energy diffusion, reflecting the realization that necessary knowledge, technology, capacity and political power rest in the hands of different actors. Furthermore, the allocation of resources in ways that are transparent and credible to all partners is likely to be important for establishing long-term expectations of reciprocal action and capacity for sustained implementation (Ostrom 1990; Berliner and Prakash 2012). Alternatively, a partnership that has not secured resources for implementation may fall largely in the category of window-dressing of existing practices, resulting in limited or no change in behaviour or collaborative impact.

Proposition 3. Partnership processes that facilitate the adaptability of partnership arrangements are likely to be conducive to greater effectiveness

While a certain degree of learning and adaptability is important for all institutions to function and remain effective as political conditions change (Dietz, Ostrom and Stern 2003), the quality of such a process may be of particular significance for partnerships because of their multi-sectoral and experimentalist nature. Partnerships tend to be entrepreneurial and experimentalist governance arrangements, in the sense that each partner reaches out of their organizational sphere and standard practices to engage in collective action with organizations characterised by different cultures, mandates, and resources. Such strategies may involve a number of risks. For public organizations, this may include risk of capture or undue influence by business or advocacy actors. For economic actors, risks may include heightened public attention and scrutiny, or transaction costs associated with partnering with public bureaucracies. If an initiative involves experimentation with new solutions to address aspects of complex problems that require the leveraging of public and private risks, its success is far from guaranteed. Therefore, partnerships that are organized in ways that anticipate the need for ‘learning by doing’ are more likely to produce sustained effects.

But can we discern ‘adaptability’ as a partnership quality and as an explanatory factor of partnership effectiveness, independent of its results? Not entirely, because adaptability is manifested in response to intermediate outcomes or to external shock and un-anticipated aspects of the problem that is targeted. The effectiveness of a partnership is thus likely to depend critically on the ability to learn through implementation, deliberation and adaptation (DeBurca et al. 2014; Hoffmann 2011). From this perspective, adaptability refers to the *process* through which the partnership is managed and implemented, and the extent to which that process allows the partners to build institutional resilience in order to address external or internal setbacks and risks. In this way it is interdependent with, but can also be distinguished from, goal-attainment and behavioural effectiveness.

Proposition 4. Partnerships that foster innovation - understood broadly as creating or facilitating access to innovative processes, institutions, technologies, or financing - are more likely to be effective in advancing sustainability objectives.

Proposition 4 rests on the assumption that leveraging innovation, which typically requires collaboration across different sectors (Anadon et al. 2016), has been one of the main rationales for the creation of partnerships (Moon et al. 2010; Szlezák et al. 2010; Kaul and Conceicao 2006). In the governance of global health, for instance, cross-sectoral partnerships have targeted issues where investment in, and access to, innovation has been frustrated by market failures or institutional barriers (Buse and Walt 2000; Held et al. 2019). Partnerships have been also rationalized as means of experimenting with innovative technologies, financing, or consensus building on global issues. And yet, we have limited systematic data across issue areas on the extent to which partnerships bring about innovative solutions. In other words, we need to examine the relation between partnership governance and innovation critically and in greater detail, to establish whether, how and to what extent individual partnerships succeed in bringing to bear innovative processes, institutions, or products. For instance, the business management literature distinguishes between philanthropic partnerships (for example, donations for specific causes) and integrative partnerships that re-examine private and societal goals to find ground for overlapping and integrated solutions (Austin and Seitanidi 2014). The latter partnership model may be more likely to produce innovation, for example, because it requires active rethinking of existing practices. Even in integrative partnerships, the degree of innovation would depend on the extent to which they depart significantly from existing processes of partner organizations, in order to experiment with new approaches. Proposition 4 therefore allows to explore systematically and in greater detail the interplay between different types of processes, and different types of effects of partnerships, with a focus on innovation as a critical factor for sustainability.

While the objective of the paper is to discern how significant the features of a partnership are in producing results and behavioural effects, our empirical analysis also considers their interplay with contextual determinants of institutional effectiveness. We furthermore take into account that the four organizational features, identified by our theoretical propositions, likely interact with each other, rather than influence partnership effectiveness independently. For example, the quality of contracting may reinforce adaptability if it includes agile accountability mechanisms, or it may hinder a process of adaptability if contracting arrangements are either very limited or too rigid.

3. Case studies and methodology

This paper adopts a comparative approach centred on the structured, focused comparison of three case studies. Upon its 1989 creation at the hands of the Costa Rican government, the Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (INBio) achieved global recognition as the first non-profit scientific organization in a developing country set up with the explicit purpose of financing biodiversity conservation by conducting a comprehensive national biodiversity inventory and marketing access to the collected ecological, biochemical and genetic information through the conclusion of access and benefit sharing (ABS) agreements, also known as bioprospecting contracts, with potential commercial users (Castree 2003; Gámez et al. 1993). The most famous of these agreements, the one concluded in 1991 with the US pharmaceutical company Merck and Co., allowed INBio to receive upfront payments, lab equipment and future royalties on any medicine developed from the over 10,000 biological and genetic samples that were to be shared by the Institute. In turn, INBio was required to channel part of its budget to the government of Costa Rica, in order for it to be invested in biodiversity conservation. Owing to the fact that its birth predated both the 1992 adoption of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) and the 2002 Earth Summit, INBio has been described as a truly pioneering effort in the mobilization of hybrid coalitions in support of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use (ten Kate and Laird 2000). Prior to its sudden demise in the 2010s, its activities were supported by additional partners including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), research institutions, and the governments of Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada and Spain (GEF 2007).⁴

The Amazon Region Protected Areas (ARPA) Programme, originally announced in 2002 during the Earth Summit and arising out of a series of processes that had already been occurring at the national and international level since the 1980s (Andonova 2014),⁵ is widely considered to be the most ambitious transnational partnerships to have emerged in the area of biodiversity conservation. Among its main actors, ARPA involved the Brazilian government, the World Bank, GEF, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the government of Germany, the state and municipal environmental agencies of the Amazon region, and a number of private foundations and donors (ARPA 2014, 2018). Thanks to the financial and technical assistance coming from transnational and international actors,⁶ ARPA was created by the government as an initiative to expand and consolidate the network of

⁴ The majority of the support provided by the GEF, Norway and the Netherlands occurred through a joint funding program known as the *Biodiversity Resources Development Project* (World Bank 1998a, 2006a).

⁵ For example, the 1992 Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforest (PP-G7) launched by Brazil, the G7 and the World Bank, and the 1998 WWF/World Bank Forest Alliance.

⁶ Funding in ARPA is administered by a non-governmental entity called Funbio, whose creation had been supported by the GEF in the 1990s. From project inception to 2014, grant resources were particularly managed through the creation of a permanent endowment fund known as the Protected Areas Trust Fund (FAP). In 2014, a new financial plan was closed by ARPA partners in order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of project activities. The plan, known as *Arpa for Life*, created a long-term sinking fund (called Transition Fund and also managed by Funbio) to guarantee that sufficient resources are available to cover the recurring costs of ARPA until a progressive transition to full government funding is completed by 2039 (WWF, 2018).

protected areas (PAs) in the Amazon region of Brazil, which has proceed across three phases of implementation 2002-2010, 2010-2017 and 2014-2039. Its approach seeks to bring together the creation of new reserves with an increase in support to PA managers, the development of new tools to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of PA management, the promotion of income-generating activities for local communities, and the identification of innovative financing mechanisms that could ensure the long-term sustainability of the system of Amazon PAs (World Bank 1998b, 2002).

The San Cristóbal Wind partnership (hereinafter, the Galápagos wind partnership) was established in 2003 as a smaller, project-based initiative between the government of Ecuador, the municipality of the San Cristobal Island, a commercial trust created by the Global Sustainable Electricity Partnership (GSEP), San Cristobal electricity utility, the United Nations Foundation (UNF), the UN Office for Partnerships (UNOP), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and a number of other private companies and local non-governmental organizations (GSEP 2008).⁷ Its activities resulted in the establishment of a business operation aiming to replace the diesel-based electricity generation system on the Galápagos' San Cristóbal Island with a hybrid wind/diesel system in order to address the island's dependence on fossil fuels and reduce the risk of oil spills that had previously had devastating consequences for marine ecosystems. Upon the completion of the partnership project, the operations and maintenance of the new system were ultimately transferred to the local electricity utility in order to also stimulate local economic development and knowledge transfer.

Taken together, these three partnerships highlight the various forms of interaction that may occur among different types of actors under the broader framework of sustainable development. They were chosen due to consideration of the contextual factors that would facilitate the comparison, as well as of the different conditions and variables that may have influenced the respective outcomes. On the one hand, all three case studies concern partnerships operating in areas of high ecological value. Their activities have sought to integrate multiple elements of biodiversity conservation and sustainable socio-economic development in their project design. In addition, the respective projects were characterized by strong forms of domestic ownership by national and regional or local governments and were embedded in similar institutional settings. By selecting cases that are broadly comparable in terms of region, political stability, and domestic political support, we focus our analysis on the way in which partnerships process and characteristics have impacted different degrees of effectiveness as stipulated in the propositions described in Section 2.

On the other hand, the scale of the three partnerships diverges considerably, including a project-based partnership (the San Cristóbal Wind Power partnership) a wider regional program that covers a vast area of the Brazilian Amazon (ARPA) and the creation of a new institution that brought together market interest and public purpose (INBio). Moreover, while all three partnerships involve global actors in the pursuit of sustainability at the local, regional and national levels, the types of transnational actors involved, and the form and rationale of their involvement are quite different. Private sector companies have played central roles in the San Cristóbal and INBio partnerships, with facilitation and some backing from international institutions. In the case of ARPA, donor institutions and foundations were more centrally present as global actors, together with the WWF as one of the largest international advocacy organizations in the area of environmental protection. Such selection of cases allows us to examine in greater depth how global private, private and advocacy actors related to public authorities and local sustainability through partnerships, under what conditions these kinds of interaction produce specific sustainability benefits and for whom.

Within each case study, we first conducted an extensive document review of primary and secondary sources, including academic literature and media articles describing partnership activities; as well as

⁷ It should be noted, however, that the capital funding coming from GSEP and the UN Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) was not meant to be repaid, as all income generated from the project was expected to be reinvested to help support further renewable energy development and biodiversity conservation in San Cristóbal.

official primary documents that are still accessible for each partnership including annual reports, assessments, research papers, brochures, memoranda of understanding. We also examined project documents submitted to multilateral and bilateral financing institutions, as well as the related project appraisal documents, policy papers, monitoring reports and communication materials developed by the partners and/or any other relevant actor. We complemented the desk research with semi-structured interviews, in order to understand in greater depth the position of different actors with respect to partnership processes and effectiveness, and where feasible, local-level impacts of partnership activities. Altogether, this methodological approach has allowed for triangulation of findings and ability to analyzing different pathways to partnership effectiveness.

Finally, we analysed the collected data using the framework that was discussed in Section 2 to trace causal processes within each case study according to the following phases of the partnership organization and implementation: (i) the development phase of the partnership, including its structures, resources and processes on the one hand, and shared objectives, strategy and approaches on the other; (ii) the partnership’s activities and outputs; (iii) the value created by the partnership and its behavioural effects on the partners themselves, as well as on target populations and other organisations and institutions; (iv) the effectiveness of the partnership with respect to both first and second order impacts (direct impacts on the specific purpose vis-à-vis indirect or wider impacts for sustainable development). In addition, we evaluated these causal processes against the four mutually interacting propositions linking partnership structure and partnership effectiveness that were also presented in Section 2, in order to assess their explanatory significance.

By applying the described analytical framework to each of the three case studies, not only did we ensure a more structured comparison between them, we also ensured a more rigorous tracing of causal processes within each partnership’s history, with a view towards developing greater understanding of the respective dynamics as well as of potential explanatory factors.

4. Evaluating effectiveness: comparative findings

4.1. Goal attainment

The first dimension of effectiveness explored with respect to the three case studies coincides with the extent to which they have been able to meet the overarching objectives that had been identified at the moment of their establishment. Owing to the complex nature of the respective project activities, in each partnership we started by identifying one overarching objective and a series of corollary objectives that are meant to support the achievement of the former, on the basis of partnership documents. These objectives, and the level of their attainment, are shown in Table 1.

Case Study	Overarching objective	Corollary objectives	Level of attainment
Amazon Region Protected Areas Programme (ARPA)	Expanding and consolidating protected areas in the Amazon region of Brazil, increasing areas under strict protection to a minimum of 10 percent of the total area covered by the Brazilian Amazon biome.	Creation of new PAs for a total of 60 mn hectares (50 million hectares initially) under protection.	Attained: ARPA now encompasses 117 PAs covering 60.8 mn hectares.
		Consolidation and improved management of existing PAs.	Partially attained , due to staff and capacity constraint at local level.
		Establishment of mechanisms for generation and managing of funds needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of PAs.	Attained: endowment of Protected Areas Fund and Transition Fund. Risks related to political change. Not attained: local revenue-generating mechanisms for PAs.
		Strengthened coordination, monitoring, management, and communication.	Partially attained: with academic assessments more critical than official ones.

San Cristóbal Wind Park project	Updating the electricity generation system on San Cristóbal island, based on burning diesel, to meet 50% of its annual electricity demand through a wind/diesel hybrid project.	Construction of the San Cristóbal Wind Park and a hybrid wind-diesel control system to connect turbines with existing power generating units.	Attained: However, due to increased electricity demand, renewables cover 30%, short of overarching objective.
		Reduced energy costs for the Ecuadorian government (due to reduced fuel subsidy burden).	Attained: around USD 2.5 million in savings estimated.
		Knowledge transfer to the host country and municipality (e.g. capacity-building activities, transfer of project to local utility upon completion, educational programs in the island).	Attained: Management of Wind Park transferred to local utility; capacity support throughout the project, educational activities (limited data).
		Promotion of additional small-scale renewable energy systems in the Galápagos Island.	Partially attained: feasibility study is being conducted for a phase II of the project.
INBio	Financing biodiversity conservation in Costa Rica by undertaking a National Biodiversity Inventory and marketing access to the related ecological, biochemical and genetic information.	Carrying out of a National Biodiversity Inventory in the conservation areas of Costa Rica between 1993 and 2003.	Attained: more than 23,000 species catalogued, 2,000 new species discovered.
		Integration of all Costa Rican biodiversity information into one single administrative entity, storing it in both a digital and physical format.	Attained: development of several innovative biodiversity information management systems.
		Facilitation of access to information related to Costa Rica's biodiversity, including promotion of sustainable commercial use and utilisation of the resulting royalties for improving conservation.	Not attained: high economic returns expected from bioprospecting agreements not sustained over the long term, failure to finance biodiversity conservation.
		Increase 'bio-literacy' in Costa Rica.	Attained

Table 1: Partnership objectives and level of attainment. Sources: authors on the basis of partnership project documents.

When it comes to their overarching objectives, all the three partnerships can be seen as relatively effective, with the notable exception of INBio's failure to generate sufficient revenues for biodiversity conservation through bioprospecting contracts such as the one concluded with Merck. In 2017, ARPA celebrated the achievement of its overall target, namely the protection of 60 million hectares of rainforest across 117 PAs (ARPA 2018), and despite some persisting shortcomings in term of management effectiveness it is widely credited with strengthening the governance of the PA system of the Brazilian Amazon (World Bank 2012, 2018). Similarly, although it did not reach the ultimate objective covering 50 percent of San Cristóbal's annual electricity demand due to greater increase in demand compared to baseline estimates, the San Cristóbal Wind Park project has substantially increased renewable energy share on the island to 30 percent in 2016 (GSEP 2016), while also reducing the energy costs and subsidy burden for the Ecuadorian government and opening a path for future renewable energy projects in the Galápagos (Enerwhere 2016). Importantly, the project has contributed substantially to the capacity of the municipality and the local energy utility for the management of energy mix, wind technology, and sustainability (Interview, Luis Vintimilla 2018). Lastly, in spite of the above-mentioned failure to raise substantial amounts of money to finance biodiversity conservation (Crook 2001; Iles 2003), the INBio experience achieved international

recognition thanks to the success of its national biodiversity inventory, which in turn allowed the institute to generate a treasure trove of information that greatly improved Costa Rica's scientific capacity and policy-making on biodiversity issues (ten Kate and Laird 2000; Iles 2003; Gámez 2007). It has also contributed to greater public awareness, education and public support for biodiversity initiatives in Costa Rica (personal communication Mariana).

On final aspect to consider in terms of goal-attainment and value creation is represented by extent to which the three partnerships achieved financial sustainability, based on a progressive transition to models based on either full domestic funding of the projects (in the ARPA and Galápagos cases) or the provision of income-generating services such as bioprospecting and environmental consulting (in the INBio case). In all three cases, the partnerships arguably remained sustainable throughout the period in which external support was present, highlighting the beneficial impacts of a partnership-based model and suggesting a baseline of very limited progress in the absence of such support.⁸ While the strategic planning for the transition was relatively effective in the Galápagos and ARPA cases,⁹ however, the decrease in grant funds coinciding with the end of GEF financing instead represented the first step of INBio's financial collapse.

4.2. Creation of value for partners

The creation of value for partners, the second elements of our theoretical framework that is closely related to goal attainment, is emphasized in business administration literature as a key rationale for both private actors and public institutions to engage in partnerships (Austin and Seitanidi 2014; Stadler and Probst 2012). For the governments of the three host countries studied in this paper, entering into a partnership was seen the only way of mobilizing sufficient funds and institutional capacity towards the implementation of ambitious domestic commitments on biodiversity conservation (INBio and ARPA)¹⁰ and reduced dependence on fossil fuel (Galápagos case).¹¹ In this context, the three projects would likely not have been undertaken with existing public sector resources given their large scope and the investment required, but in addition, the partnerships served to build cooperation and trust among the financing institutions, private donors and investors seeking to fund additional projects in related sectors. In each context, the partnerships resulted in the establishment of new and additional funding mechanisms to support programs on biodiversity prospecting and research, protected areas and biodiversity managements, and investment in renewable energy

⁸ For example, in the Galápagos case, the final performance summary released by GSEP revealed that the operation of the project, which could not have been carried out using solely public resources, would not have been financially feasible under a strictly private financing scheme either. The fact that project financing occurred through non-refundable grants, however, made it unnecessary to provide resources to recover the capital investment (GSEP 2016).

⁹ In 2016, when the ownership of the San Cristóbal Wind Park was transferred to the local, publicly-owned electricity company (Elecgalápagos S.A.), the financial situation improved due to the more benign taxation faced by this type of companies in Ecuador. Similarly, the ARPA partnership's long-term sustainability was tentatively secured in 2014 through the above-mentioned financial plan known as *ARPA for Life* (WWF 2018).

¹⁰ In Costa Rica, INBio's goal to increase knowledge about the country's biodiversity while developing non-destructive uses of such biodiversity was seen as a key contribution to the country's 1989 National Conservation Strategy for Sustainable Development (Gámez et al. 1993) and the domestic implementation of the 1992 CBD. In Brazil, the ARPA partnership was considered necessary to achieve then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso's commitment to increase areas of the Brazilian Amazon under strict protection to a minimum of 10 percent of its total area (World Bank 1998b), while also contributing to the country's commitments under the CBD, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda.

¹¹ At the beginning of the 2000s, the Ecuadorian government had launched a vision to reach zero fossil fuel use in the four populated islands in the Galápagos by 2015. As part of these efforts, which included the analysed project, the government launched a broader partnership with UNDP and the GEF known as ERGAL (Renewable Electrification of the Galápagos Islands) (UNDP 2015).

respectively. While the creation of value is more immediately clear in terms advancing domestic capacity for sustainability in the ARPA and Gálapagos partnerships, the evidence is more mixed in the case of INBio, given that despite the important results of its national biodiversity inventory,¹² INBio did not lead to an expected increase in the country's income from bioprospecting and its channelling towards biodiversity conservation efforts or opportunities for sustainable livelihoods (Crook 2001; Richerzagen and Holm-Mueller 2005).

For the UN agencies, international NGOs and multilateral financing institutions involved in the three partnerships, the value created translates primarily as contribution to the advancement of their respective strategic objectives. For WWF, ARPA became a flagship initiative illustrating the potential of similar mechanisms for engaging governments and public and private donors in forest conservation programs, with the additional value of mitigating carbon emissions associated with avoided deforestation (WWF 2018). The partnerships fitted with a broader set of strategic partnerships of the organization such as the Forest Stewardship Council, the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil, and the Gold Standard for certifying voluntary carbon offsets, all of which seek to attract public and market partners to intervene in commodities chains that affect forests and biodiversity. For the World Bank, support for partnerships such as ARPA and INBio (often together with, or through, the GEF) was part of a larger strategy for greening the organization in response to strong advocacy pressure since the late 1980s, while also creating soft funding mechanisms to promote biodiversity and sustainable development through country strategies and large visible partnership initiatives (Andonova 2017).¹³

For donor country governments providing assistance through their development or technical cooperation agencies in the ARPA and INBio case studies, the supported activities were fundamentally seen as aligned with the respective priorities for development cooperation, as well as with these countries' international commitments to technology and knowledge transfer under the CBD (Hansson 1997; NORAD 2008; BMZ and BMU 2018).

Private companies were also involved in two of the partnerships, namely electricity companies that participated in the San Cristóbal project through the GSEP and the pharmaceutical companies (including Merck) that acted as commercial partners in the bioprospecting agreements with INBio. In the latter case, enhanced legal security in the access to and exploitation of genetic resources was the most important value created for Merck and the other companies involved. However, there is more limited information on the extent to which such access translated into commercial benefit for the company, as no product based on its samples had yet reached the market by the late 2000s (Gámez 2007). In the case of San Cristóbal, the project manager for the involved electricity companies instead explained that project was "designed with a business case in mind, but not on a commercial basis." The main motivation of the private companies and the GSEP industry group was to lead in developing the first wind energy project ever installed in a remote island, in a way that could be commercially viable in the long run and demonstrate the plausibility of developing clean electricity to displace fossil fuels.

The collaboration with UN agencies such as UNDP, the Government of Ecuador, and the municipality of San Cristóbal supported the visibility and reputational value of the partnership and addressed the

¹² By the end of the inventory activities supported by the GEF and by the governments of Norway and the Netherlands in 2005, INBio had become a worldwide leader in taxonomic inventory and largely exceeded its original goals, amassing an exceptional collection of more than 3.5 million specimens (around 23,000 species, of which 2,000 were newly discovered) (World Bank 2006, INBio 2010).

¹³ See for example, World Bank Country Partnership Strategies for Brazil (World Bank 2018); World Bank's Country Partnership Strategies for Costa Rica (e.g. World Bank 2004) World Bank / WWF Forest Alliance (World Bank 1998b) and Forests for Life Campaign (WWF 2018: 6); GEF Global Operational Strategy 1995 (World Bank 1998a); Operational Program on Forest Ecosystems; and UN Development Assistance Framework for Ecuador (UNDP 2014): promotion of environmentally sustainable practices and models in the productive sector.

important issue of the political and transaction cost risks associated with the project. For example, the final performance summary released by GSEP revealed that the operation of the project, which could not have been carried out using solely public resources, would not have been financially feasible under a strictly private financing scheme either. The fact that project financing occurred through non-refundable grants, however, made it unnecessary to provide resources to recover the capital investment (GSEP 2016); any future returns from the first phase of the project were reinvested in building capacity on the island or similar projects through the GSEP.¹⁴ In sum, the principal value created for transnational companies and their association has been the demonstration of the feasibility of investing into a major wind electricity project in the context of global objectives to promote renewable energy in developing countries with high vulnerability to climate change, and the first-mover reputation and leadership implication for such an investment.¹⁵

Finally, in the Galápagos case, local partners including the Municipality of San Cristobal, the local utility company Eólica San Cristóbal S.A. (EOLICSA), and the Charles Darwin foundation, an environmental association, are explicitly recognized as partners in the transnational initiative. According to an interview with Luis Vintimilla, General Manager of EOLICSA, the most important value created was for the local electricity company, which had no experience, knowledge or technical capacity in the field of renewables before the implementation of the partnership. For the San Cristobal Municipality, the project was important because it was facing a critical situation relating to the environmental damages associated with the transportation and use of fossil fuels in the archipelago.¹⁶ The partnership was also a “window to demonstrate to mainland that people of San Cristóbal were able to own such an important investment,” and to promote sustainability in the Galápagos.¹⁷

By examining the value created for partners in transnational partnership initiatives, it is also possible to point to more critical questions as to who gets to be partner. Our cases reveal that these particular partnerships tend to be driven to a large extent by global partners and national governments, including large financial institutions, UN agencies, transnational companies and associations, public and private donors and transnational NGOs. Therefore, even in local embedded partnership, we see a strong drive and influence by powerful global actors in the way sustainability is practiced through partnership. Only in the Galápagos case, the municipality and local electricity utility were seen as core partners, in part as a result of its design and objectives, and subsequently the Darwin Foundation as a partner for addressing the complexity and fragility of the ecosystem in which the project was implemented. We would revisit this aspect again in subsequent sections, when we examine processes of collaboration and the impact of partnership activities on affected communities and on sustainability.

4.3. Collaboration inside and outside the partnerships

In the three partnerships included in this study, the more immediate behavioural effects on ‘horizontal’ collaboration are often relatively easy to identify, as they usually evaluated in project documents (e.g. the implementation reports of the financing institutions) and independent appraisals. By contrast, in some cases it becomes difficult to evaluate these effects against a counterfactual, as project activities can overlap, or be embedded in, other pre-existing efforts and collaborations. For example, Brazil had seen forest partnerships with entities such as the World Bank and the German government emerge in the Amazon region since the end of the 1980s, and some of these efforts continued throughout the duration of ARPA. Similarly, the San Cristóbal project was embeddedness

¹⁴ Interview with P. Loeffelman, September 2018.

¹⁵ Interview with M. Provoste, CEO of GSEP, September 2018.

¹⁶ Interview with L. Vintimilla, General Manager of EOLICSA, September 2018.

¹⁷ Ibid.

in a long-standing cooperation between UNDP and Ecuador on issues ranging from climate change to local economic development.

While only minor setbacks and challenges to collaboration were reported in most project documents (World Bank 2006, 2009; GSEP 2016), the outcomes for this dimension of effectiveness appear particularly mixed in terms of the level of support provided by the governments of the host countries. On one end of the spectrum, the San Cristóbal Wind Park project appeared relatively well-insulated from the potential of shifting political interests, as it prompted both the national government and the municipality of San Cristóbal to mobilize significant resources through innovative means (e.g. the allocation to the project of local income tax revenues, the provision of special government grants). An interview with Martin Provost, the CEO of the GSEP, emphasized that managing collaboration among partners and with local constituencies, was a fundamental aspect of the implementation of the partnership. The industry saw the Galápagos project as a high-risk endeavour in terms of investment, transaction costs, and operation in a fragile and isolated environment. The industry project manager described it as “a hard project, which does not pencil out quickly from the perspective of commercial developers and in terms of return to investment,”¹⁸ but potentially a very high-value project in terms of innovation, breaking new grounds for the deployment of renewable electricity and corporate sustainability. As a consequence of this high risk-awareness, the collaboration among partners was on the first and critical aspect of the partnership: “success is contingent on the right risk allocation. You allocate the risk to the party that can bear it, otherwise you will fail. If you allocate the technical risk to the government, they will not be able to bear it. Different partners have different to manage environmental, financial risks, technical, community, and policy aspects of the partnerships.”¹⁹

On the other end of the spectrum, the relationship between the Costa Rican government and INBio suffered during times of political change, becoming increasingly contentious due to the latter’s perceived lack of transparency and accountability and culminating in a controversial bailout of the failing institution in 2015 (Wade 2014; Fonseca 2015). Between the two, the ARPA case experienced a first phase in which Brazil’s leadership and commitment to domestic policy reform was generally applauded by its international partners, followed by a more recent one (coinciding with the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the inauguration of current President Jair Messias Bolsonaro in 2019) characterized by a dramatically different political environment, soaring deforestation rates, and a more confrontational stance towards international environmental NGOs and foreign governments (WWF 2017, 2018; PRODES/INPE 2018).

Since the problem that a partnership seek to address might not be directly caused by the actors participating in it, and because its solution might hinge on the targeting of underlying drivers through broader coalitions of actors, it is also important to evaluate the three case studies against their impact on external (or ‘vertical’) collaboration and other institutions. From this perspective, a first layer concerns the partnerships’ effects on public policy and the resulting behavior of affected private actors, while a second layer can be identified in the spill-over of knowledge and practices at the national and international level. With respect to the former, the relevant experiences of the ARPA and INBio cases attest to a modest success in engaging with the private actors that both partnerships sought to rein in. Although ARPA contributed to strengthening domestic capacity and forest policies in Brazil, the partnership largely avoided the targeting of large private interests surrounding the country’s ‘deforestation arch’, focusing instead on the creation and management of PAs (Trancoso et al., 2010)²⁰. Similarly, the legal framework governing ABS in Costa Rica had a temporary impact on the behaviour of the private companies stipulating bioprospecting agreements with INBio (i.e. instead of obtaining access without prior informed consent and a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits,

¹⁸ Interview, P. Loeffelman, September 2018.

¹⁹ Interview, M. Provost, September 2018.

²⁰ See also interview with C. Maretti, March 2019; and M. Ferreira, March 2019.

see Richerzagen and Holm-Mueller 2005), but it was quickly rendered obsolete as these same companies progressively abandoned natural samples to embrace research on synthetic compounds and digital sequencing information techniques (Conniff 2012).

When it comes to the spill-over of practices, these three partnerships constituted pioneering efforts in their own fields, and for this reason have represented important opportunities for institutional learning and testing of new methodologies that have been later replicated elsewhere.²¹ At the same time, their effects on international collaboration have been more limited, raising important questions on the scalability of a partnership model outside its specific geographical and political context. This outcome might indeed have been anticipated with respect to the INBio and San Cristóbal Wind Park partnerships, which consist of narrower, project-based initiatives. However, it is also evident in the context of the ARPA experience, which has not scaled up outside the Brazilian context nor did it lead to a regional legal framework for the protection of the Amazon rainforest. The partnership has contributed to the creation of the Amazon Fund as a major new instrument for financing protected areas and sustainability, the uptake of REDD-plus initiatives in Brazil (ARPA 2012b: 36, 43-46) and the recent development of the Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program.²²

4.4. Impact on affected populations and wider sustainable development objectives

Ultimately, all three partnerships were expected to complement their overarching goals with a series of broader sustainable development objectives that included, among others, reduced GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and deployment of renewable technology (ARPA and Galápagos cases), creation of revenue-generating mechanisms for financing biodiversity conservation (all three), knowledge transfer to the host country (all three), replication of the project as a best practice (all three), local participation in decision-making (ARPA and INBio) and local consultation (Galápagos case), and promotion of local economic development (all three).

Beyond their overarching impact on goal-attainment, a more complete picture of the partnerships' wider environmental impacts suggests that the ARPA and Galápagos partnerships have been largely effective in terms of their biodiversity conservation and reduced GHG emission objectives, despite the inevitability of challenges [see Table 2]. By contrast, with respect to our third case study, the activities of INBio suffered from a lack of consistent monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity impacts (Castree 2003), and their positive effects are usually circumscribed to increased biodiversity knowledge, public awareness about biodiversity values, and influence on Costa Rican policy developments (World Bank, 2006).

Case Study	Environmental issue	Sustainability effect	Limitations
Amazon Region Protected Areas Programme (ARPA)	Biodiversity conservation	High ecological representativeness of PAs (ARPA 2012a; Oliveira et al. 2017, Fonseca and Venticinque 2018)	Gaps in representativeness of PAs (e.g. lack of integrated watershed management) (Trancoso et al. 2010; Castello et al. 2013).
		Significant potential impact on biodiversity (ARPA 2012a)	Small impact compared to the wide range of deforestation drivers (Trancoso et al 2010)
			Absence of overarching biodiversity monitoring (Hopkins 2007; Collen et al. 2008; MMA 2007)

²¹ See for example de Camino et al. 2000 for the World Bank/GEF's financing of INBio.

²² See https://www.funbio.org.br/en/programas_e_projetos/asl/ (accessed 5 January 2019).

	Deforestation and climate change	Significant reduction in GHG emissions (Soares-Filho et al. 2008)	Selection of PAs outside the agro-business Amazon arch: limited additional impact on reducing emissions from deforestation (Trancoso et al. 2010) Alleged displacement of timber harvesting to the Cerrado forest region
		Higher performance in ARPA vs. non-ARPA PAs (ARPA 2012b)	
		Capacity built for other climate initiatives in Brazil (ARPA 2012b)	
San Cristóbal Wind Park project	Biodiversity conservation	2.3 million gallons in fuel shipments avoided: reduced risk of oil spills (GSEP 2016)	Some deaths of non-endangered birds recorded due to the turbines (GSEP 2016)
		No protected fauna affected by turbines (GSEP 2016)	
		Positive impact of ancillary conservation activities (GSEP 2014)	
	Climate change	Avoided cumulative emissions for 21,000 tonnes (GSEP 2016)	Fossil fuel consumption has increased in the Galápagos due to population growth and rising demands (GSEP 2016; UNDP 2014)
Built capacity to decarbonize Galápagos and implement Ecuador's commitment under the Paris Agreement (GSEP 2014; Government of Ecuador 2015)			
INBio	Biodiversity conservation	Biodiversity knowledge developed through the National Biodiversity Inventory important in a wide range of policy and legal developments in Costa Rica (World Bank 2006)	No project indicator linked the development of the National Biodiversity Inventory with improved biodiversity conservation (Castree 2003; World Bank 2006)
		Costa Rica established as an attractive hub and testing ground for innovative practices in biodiversity conservation (Royas and Aylward 2003; World Bank 2015)	
		Some funding generated through bioprospecting channelled to PAs or used to support research efforts (Iles 2003)	Funding stream for biodiversity conservation and sustainable economic activities in PAs remained inadequate (Iles 2003; Nagoda and Tveteraas 2001). Limits in available information.

Table 2: Partnership effects and limitations on the environmental sustainability. Source: authors, based on project documents, interviews and academic literature.

The impacts of the three partnerships appear more difficult to assess with respect to their anticipated socio-economic and welfare effects, including the contribution to local economic development and the promotion of forms of participatory decision-making. Despite its claims to having built local technical capacity and created job opportunities for the operations of the wind park, the Galápagos partnership did not collect any quantitative data on its training and capacity-building activities (GSEP 2014). The most significant and documented local effect on environmental, economic and social sustainability has to do with the completion of the wind farm and the transfer of its long-term management to the local electricity utility, which was one of the main co-implementing partners and thus benefited from significant technical and knowledge transfer. The San Cristóbal project was also one of the first projects on the island to include a public communication and consultation program upstream, and a collaboration with the Darwin Foundation on its environmental management. The

Galápagos partnership witnessed an important engagement of local political and societal actors, as a consequence of the high degree of sensitivity associated with a large infrastructure project in the archipelago and the early mobilization of civil society that put into question its feasibility and environmental impact as a core concern.

In the case of INBio, the anticipated support to alternative livelihoods in local communities was widely seen as insufficient to create long-lasting economic benefits and incentives for conservation (Crook 2001, Castree 2003, Iles 2003), adding to a perception that the institute never liaised appropriately with local communities and indigenous groups (Castree 2003; World Bank 2006; Miller 2006) and rather contributed to strengthen private companies' position as the main actors deciding the fate of genetic resources and biotechnology development (Iles 2003; ten Kate and Aylward 2000; Royas and Aylward 2003). By contrast, despite its financial failure, the INBioparque and the Institute's broader educational and recreational initiatives became the main outlet and symbol of its contribution to environmental education and engagement with issues of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.²³

Lastly, while ARPA succeeded in making the management process of PAs more inclusive through the establishment of participatory management councils and community-level subprojects on sustainable resource use, the partnership's impact on poverty alleviation has been estimated to be negligible (Pinho et al. 2014; Leme da Silva and Ferreira Bueno 2017; World Bank 2018). In particular, not only did a vast majority of PAs report difficulties with the financial sustainability of this aspect of the program, it was also concluded that the support provided to traditional income-generating activities in these areas remained unable to address local socio-economic needs or alter the opportunity costs of forest users (World Bank 2018)²⁴. This brings us back to critical question as who gets to be seen as a partner and have influence on the ultimate objectives and implementation of globally-driven public-private partnerships.

More broadly, the evaluation of local-level impacts of the three partnerships on the welfare of target populations suffers from a chronic lack of data availability, as existing project assessments often rely on qualitative reports from partnership actors rather than on a rigorous engagement with the actual beneficiaries of project activities. A glaring example can be seen in ARPA PAs, where not only have instances of limited collaboration with indigenous groups resulted in cases of inefficient use of financial resources, but the existence itself of the partnership has also remained largely unknown to the affected communities.²⁵

5. Conditions for effectiveness: sophisticated contracting and its impact on resources, adaptation and innovation

Having presented our findings with respect to the different dimensions of effectiveness included in the volume's analytical framework, we now turn to exploring their interplay with the four conditions that we identified in Section 2, and namely: (i) sophisticated contracting; (ii) credible commitment of resources; (iii) adaptation and learning-by-doing; and (iv) innovation. As a starting point, it should be emphasised that like other contextual factors that similarly concur to shape partnership outcomes, these specific conditions for effectiveness are also unlikely to operate in isolation. On the contrary, they should be expected to exist along a continuum, interacting with each other through positive (or negative) feedback loops throughout a partnership's governance history. But how do these dynamics unfold in practice?

²³ Marian Aymerich, personal communication, 2018.

²⁴ See also interview with Seu Ademar, March 2019.

²⁵ Interview with Fabiano Silva, March 2019.

While it might not always be possible to identify an exact chain of causality, the ARPA and San Cristóbal case studies suggest that the design of sophisticated (but not excessively rigid) forms of contracting may play an early role as a core driver of effectiveness. In both cases the core partners invested in clarifying the common objectives and approaches of the partnership; determining the levels of partner engagement according to their capacity and expertise; establishing the value expected by each partner as a result of such engagement; and importantly creating channels for information and mutual accountability (e.g. independent evaluations, the setting of specific targets for implementation, adoption of participatory management techniques, strict conditions for financial disbursement) that can allow public and private partners to influence each other's behaviour and thereby manage partnership activities with a view to potential risks of abrupt political change or shifting interests (World Bank 2012; WWF 2018; GSEP 2008).²⁶ By contrast, the INBio case shows that a lack of coherence and insufficient accountability mechanisms in the initial structure of a partnership can significantly alter its budget and planning from one year to the next (Wade 2014; Fonseca 2015) as well as expose its activities to severe criticism for their perceived lack of transparency (Iles 2003, Royas and Aylward 2003, Isla 2015). These concerns extend in particular to the contractual arrangements of the Merck-INBio agreement and the other bioprospecting contracts that were seen as vital to the activities of the Institute.

Furthermore, the initial structure and contractual arrangements of partnership agreements and the distribution of responsibility and risk management may also enable the emergence of the other three conditions for effectiveness. First, the presence of clear governance arrangements and conditions for communication, feedback and accountability was found to encourage the credible commitment of resources by the partners in the ARPA and San Cristóbal cases (WWF 2018, GSEP 2014), while the absence of a shared long-term vision for the funding of INBio became a significant source of uncertainty when bioprospecting failed to become a viable source of revenue (Gámez 2007, Conniff 2012). Secondly, in all three case studies the mobilisation of each partner's comparative expertise facilitated the delivery of new products, processes and services in support of the partnerships' overarching objectives, ranging from INBio's pioneering biodiversity inventory to the innovative tools and methodologies used by ARPA to prioritise interventions and evaluate project implementation.²⁷ Third, sophisticated contracting in the ARPA and San Cristóbal partnerships provided the basis for the deployment of monitoring mechanisms and other technical tools aimed at assessing the intermediate progress of project activities, thus creating the space for adaptation to shocks and changing contexts. For example, ARPA partners adopted several changes to the program as a result of their periodical evaluations, including periodic increases in ambition, the ongoing revision of the timeline for implementation and the introduction of the *Arpa for Life* financing model, inspired by the concept of project finance for permanence (WWF 2015). Similarly, specific elements of the project for a San Cristóbal electricity generating system were modified due to the results of preliminary and intermediate studies, including changes to the project location and design and the introduction of environmental mitigation measures (UNFCCC 2007; GSEP 2008; Eurekalert 2016).

²⁶ Notably, there is limited evidence of involvement of local communities in these accountability mechanisms. In ARPA, affected communities have been represented primarily by more established NGOs that were assigned seats within its various committees and panels (World Bank 1998b, interview with Claudio Maretti, March 2019; interview with Fabiano Silva, March 2019). Similarly, in the Galápagos case, civil society instances were mostly raised through the local authorities and the Charles Darwin Foundation rather than the community per se.

²⁷ For example, ARPA introduced an online system known as *Cérebro* to allocate resources to specific protected areas. In turn, *Cérebro* itself was based on another innovation, known as *conta vinculada*, which consisted in the use of special blocked accounts in order to ensure a faster and decentralized access by PA managers to the funds they needed. In terms of monitoring tools, ARPA relied on instruments including Conservation and Investment Strategy (ECI), which serves to identify existing financing needs at the PA level and compare them with available resources to facilitate prioritization; FAUC and SisArpa, which are monitoring tools to keep track of key information on PA management activities; and RAPPAM, a WWF-developed methodology to evaluate management effectiveness.

At the same time, our case studies make it clear that sophisticated contracting itself neither emerges nor exists in a vacuum. At the level of partnership design, the quality of contracting can be positively influenced by pre-existing experiences of successful collaboration among the partners, which contribute to raise capacity for implementation and trust in the mutual adherence to partnership terms. In the ARPA case, these collaborations can for example be traced back to a number of earlier multilateral and bilateral arrangements on forest conservation, including the above-mentioned PP-G7, as well as individual leadership by actors such as the former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso; then-Director General of the World Bank Claude Martin; and former World Bank President James Wolfensohn (World Bank 1998b, WWF 2018; Martin 2015).

In the initial phase of a partnership, the credible commitment of resources can also feed back into the outcomes of contracting, in the sense that partners that anticipate having to manage significant amounts of funding, technology and knowledge may be more likely to identify governance mechanisms that set specific conditions for the effective deployment of such resources. In ARPA, the need to ensure credible resource allocation in the rollout of a program of similar ambition and complexity resulted in the appointment of Funbio, an independent non-governmental entity, as the manager of all grant resources through both the Protected Areas Fund (until 2017) and the Transition Fund (from 2017 onwards). Similarly, in the San Cristóbal case, GSEP member companies formally committed to reinvesting all earnings from the electricity generating system into its operations, in soft loans reimbursements, and in special funds for bird protection and plant dismantling (GSEP 2014). As GSEP partners pointed out in an interview, “Unless you distribute responsibility and risk according to partner comparative capability and include public communication and consultation program upstream, you will kill the project, you will not succeed.”²⁸

Finally, sophisticated contracting may both facilitate and be strengthened by the progressive emergence of adaptive responses and innovations that it has helped to facilitate. Especially in those cases in which the lifespan of a partnership is expected to extend over several years, the development of new technologies or the successful adaptation to shocks and shifting political contexts may support the extension and revision of initial partnership arrangements, as evidenced by the development of the *ARPA for Life* financing model in the ARPA case or the regulations adopted in San Cristóbal to channel local income tax revenues to the financing of the Wind Park project. By contrast, the INBio case demonstrates that a partnership’s capacity for adaptation and experimentation is not a sufficient condition for success, in the absence of a clear initial strategy and the credible commitment of all partners. On the one hand, the founders of INBio had not immediately thought of long-term alternatives to bioprospecting revenues, which were anticipated to quickly emerge as the Institute’s core business due to a series of overly optimistic expectations (Coughlin 1993, Zebich-Knos 1997).²⁹ By the time these revenue collapsed, its original partners had started decreasing their contributions and INBio’s relationship with the Costa Rican government had also completely deteriorated (Gámez 2007, Miller 2006). As a result, not only did INBio fail in raising sufficient resources through new revenue-generating mechanisms (e.g. environmental consulting, the management of INBioparque), but the government’s decision to bailout the Institute and rescue its biodiversity collection only came when the destiny of the institution was already traced (Fonseca 2015).³⁰ In the cases of ARPA and San Cristóbal, there were multiple episodes of adapting and learning, particularly with respect to the local political, social and environmental conditions. However, one of the unintended consequences

²⁸ Interview with M. Provost, September 2018.

²⁹ By contrast, even if the San Cristóbal partnership had envisioned the verification and sale of carbon credits under the Clean Development Mechanism of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change as a potential source of revenue, it never considered it as the potential main funding stream for the project. Therefore, the partners did not hesitate to put verification and registration of credits on hold when prices slumped in international markets in 2013.

³⁰ On the contrary, GSEP’s continued commitment in the Galápagos case allowed the San Cristóbal project to operate at a loss until its ownership was transferred to the local electricity utility in 2016.

of the need for learning-by-doing and adapting to contextual factors, has likely been the difficulty of scaling-up and transferring partnership experience outside of its original contexts.

6. Conclusion

This paper sought to explore the mechanisms through which three partnerships in the areas of biodiversity and clean energy have exerted behavioural influence on their partners, as well as the key factors shaping their variable impacts on a range of different sustainable development outcomes. It should be noted that the particular selection of case studies, which was inspired by the need to ensure a reliable comparison between them, is also a potential source of limitation. For example, we only decided to focus on transnational partnerships whose creation was inspired by similar sets of considerations, operating in a specific geographical and political context, and characterized by a sufficiently long governance history. Furthermore, we remain aware that it might be difficult to neatly isolate the effects described in this chapter from those of the other institutions and policies in which partnerships are embedded, or with which they coexist.

Nevertheless, our findings suggest that while all three initiatives were either partly or largely successful in attaining their stated goals, an analysis of different dimensions of effectiveness can help reveal a more nuanced picture. More specifically, three challenges emerged as particularly relevant across the three case studies, and namely: (i) the achievement of long-term financial sustainability through the creation of a reliable funding model; (ii) the difficulty of maintaining an adequate level of support by the government of the host country, owing to the possibility of a rapidly changing political context; and (iii) the effective targeting of socio-economic co-benefits and local livelihoods through the partnership's activities.

When the above-mentioned challenges (and partnership effects more generally) are evaluated against the four conditions for effectiveness proposed in Section 2, it is evident that different institutional features and dynamics interact with each other to make a difference on the long-term impacts of a partnership. First, a level of contracting that clarifies common objectives, approaches, responsibilities and conditions for accountability can be seen as an important factor in strengthening trust and mobilising the comparative advantages of each partner. Second, the credible commitment of resources, which appears to be stronger when a partnership builds upon pre-existing collaborative efforts and sophisticated forms of contracting, may further contribute to raise capacity and stimulate innovation in governance mechanisms. Third, we find that the capacity to foster adaptation through clear partnership arrangements and learning-by-doing approaches can also provide an explanatory factor for the longevity of partnerships, although it might not be able to overcome a lack of commitment by partners and major flaws in the initial partnership strategy.

By means of conclusion, our case studies show that the success of a partnership model does not guarantee that the partnership will be replicated outside of its geographical and political context. While the three partnerships discussed here have certainly had important spill-over effects, disseminating new knowledge and practices at different scales, their direct impact on international collaboration on biodiversity and clean energy has arguably been limited. Whereas this might be expected for initiatives that do not directly engage in regulatory activities at the international level, such as the ones included in our analysis, it also speaks to the magnitude and complexity of the sustainable development implementation gap, especially on issue areas that remain characterised by rapid changes in national political environments and ongoing gridlocks in intergovernmental negotiations.

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