

Designing Public-Private Partnerships for Development

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par

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Summary

Companies increasingly engage in partnerships with governments and civil society organizations to address complex development problems. Building on the discourses on business in society, collaboration, and development, scholars have stressed the benefits that such partnerships, here termed public-private partnerships (PPPs) for development, may offer to the partner organizations involved and to society in general. While the concept of collaborative advantage is the “theoretical guiding light,” partnering practice proves challenging. Acknowledging that scholars have primarily focused on relationship management and leadership in PPPs for development, this dissertation fills important gaps, contributing to the construction of a comprehensive design perspective with two conceptual and two empirical papers.

Paper I integrates existing insights into the company perspective and highlights that potential tensions between the companies' economic interests and the PPP's social goal can be narrowed with conscious management. That is, company managers should consider a mix of economic interests to sustain incentives throughout the PPP's implementation. The simultaneous realization of economic and social interests then requires targeted managerial efforts at the company and partnership levels. Paper I has been published in the *Journal of Corporate Citizenship* (2012), Vol. 44, pp. 85-106.

Following a call to go beyond a “one-size-fits-all” approach to PPPs for development, Paper II examines the role which different structures can play in handling common design challenges. Based on a theoretical analysis and deduced propositions, it contributes to building a framework that facilitates more informed and tailored decisions to structure PPPs for development. The paper strongly recommends that the PPP's scope, differences in the partners' backgrounds, the areas of authority of the partners involved, and the need for beneficiary involvement be taken into account. Paper II has been published in *Management* (2012), Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 77-100.

Recognizing that significant challenges also arise at the PPP's interfaces with its environment, Paper III builds on a comparative case study of four PPPs for development and investigates how partners cope with boundary tensions. As the qualitative findings suggest four generic strategies that involve the reflected and focused buffering, spanning, and bringing-up of boundaries, Paper III develops a comprehensive boundary framework and provides new insights into the concept of collaborative advantage.

Paper IV then focuses on the role of broker organizations, which increasingly facilitate the partnering process of PPPs for development. Based on a seminal qualitative study of 19 broker organizations, the paper highlights that these organizations can act in the roles of convener, mediator, and learning catalyst and develops a theoretical framework for their roles throughout the PPP life cycle. Paper IV has been published in the *European Management Journal* (2012), Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 32-46.

Overall, complementing existing findings on the relational and leadership dimensions of PPPs for development, this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of how to design these partnerships from the corporate, structural, boundary, and broker organization perspectives. Respective insights are important for advancing the discourse on business engagement in society that has moved from the “whether” to the “how,” and for enhancing a PPP’s benefits for the partner organizations involved and for society in general.