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8 Partnerships under Pressure

Lessons on Adaptation and Overcoming Challenges

Amanda Sardonis and Henry Lee

Introduction

Partnerships are inherently challenging. They require two or more partners to share common goals and to work together over the lifetime of a project. While each partner may bring different skills, experiences and resources to the partnership, each also has different cultures, priorities and needs. Allocating responsibilities between partners to maximize effectiveness is thus a complex endeavor – even when partners are in the same sector. Moreover, external factors such as government changes or fluctuations in business cycles may place partnerships under pressure. In some instances, partnerships may be unable to gain needed political support or obtain financing. In other cases, catalytic events or trends that partners anticipate may not occur; or partnership arrangements become plagued by governance problems in the operation and management of the project.

In sum, realizing and sustaining the benefits of the partnership while minimizing financial and political costs can be daunting, requiring a high level of flexibility, creativity and commitment among the partners. This is why the capacity of a partnership to adapt and learn as conditions change is increasingly discussed as an important indicator of its ability to overcome challenges and achieve its overarching objectives (Andonova 2017; Cheng et al. 2015; De Burca et al. 2014; Hoffmann 2011; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). In this volume, the presence of processes that facilitate the adaptability of partnerships is hypothesized to be a condition leading to greater partnership effectiveness (see Chapter 1).

This chapter investigates the durability of partnership arrangements and their adaptability as a key condition for partnership effectiveness and long-term sustainability, consistent with Proposition 3 of the volume’s analytical framework. We study a set of partnership initiatives selected as finalists for the Roy Family Award for Environmental Partnership, a biennial award established in 2003 by the Harvard Kennedy School to recognize effective, high-potential and innovative cross-sector partnerships that create significant benefits for the partners, their stakeholders and the environment. Since its inception through the end of 2018, 43 separate partnerships were selected as finalists and eight were chosen for the Award, with a significant variation in geographic scope, the range of topics addressed and sustainability impacts. To assess if and how these partnerships

lived up to their initial potential, we sent a survey to 37 of these partnerships. Our goal was to understand whether and how they adapted to overcome the challenges that they encountered. In this chapter we summarize the responses to this survey and present three case studies examining in greater detail the varying level of adaptability of the three partnerships, the different dynamics of such adaptability and how the partnerships' ability to adapt impacted their effectiveness.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. First, we present a brief history of the Roy Award program and discuss our methodology. Next, we briefly discuss the results of the survey of the 37 partnerships before introducing the three case studies – the Noel Kempff Climate Action Project, Mexico City Metrobús, and Alianza Shire. Finally, we provide a comparative discussion of how adaptability influences pathways to effectiveness across the three cases and present our conclusions.

Research Methods

The Roy Award Program

Since 2003, the Environment and Natural Resources Program (ENRP) at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) has presented a biennial award to a “cross-sector partnership that enhances environmental quality through novel and creative approaches” (Belfer Center 2021). The award recognizes the most promising of these partnerships and provides a positive incentive for governments, corporations and organizations to push the boundaries of creativity by taking risks that result in significant environmental value. Recipient partnerships must demonstrate a high level of creativity, make a significant contribution to the environment and have the potential to be replicable in other regions and countries.

When the award was established, the program defined public-private partnership as a cooperative, authority-sharing relationship between actors in the public sector (governments large and small and/or government agencies, intergovernmental organizations) and the private sector (corporations, civic organizations). In 2003, terms like multi-stakeholder partnerships and cross-sector partnership were not in wide use. “Public-private partnership” was thus a recognized and recognizable shorthand for cooperative relationships with actors in different sectors. Perhaps because of the legal and contractual implications of the term “partnership,” we have seen a widening of the terminology used to include collaborations, alliances, cooperative ventures, inter-organizational collaborations, multi-sectoral relationships, distributive governance, collaborative alliances, etc. Over the years, the Roy Award has shifted its language from public-private partnerships to cross-sector partnerships in order to reflect the progressive widening of the partnership terminology.

The Roy Award program uses three basic criteria for identifying potential nominees and assessing nominations: each must engage in a partnership, defined as participation of two or more separate organizations or actors; those organizations or actors must operate in at least two different sectors (academic, civic,

business, government or non-profit); and the partners must work together collaboratively on a project or program that tangibly improves the quality of the environment. Nominations that meet the basic criteria and nominees identified by the program undergo a preliminary assessment using four evaluation criteria: innovation, effectiveness, transferability and significance. Notably, the concepts of innovation and effectiveness are defined slightly differently than in the present volume. More specifically, the notion of innovation refers to the creativity of the project's approach to solving an environmental problem, as well as to creativity in partnership design. Effectiveness is measured by determining if and how the project has made demonstrable, concrete progress toward achieving its goals.

After an in-house review, the pool is narrowed down to between five and seven finalists. These finalists are not necessarily the six highest scoring partnerships in the pool, but represent a diversity of regions, topics, and partnership structures. A comprehensive assessment is prepared on each finalist, which is sent to a panel of external reviewers. The purpose of the external review is to gather expert opinion to inform the Harvard selection committee, which selects the winner. The Award is not a "lifetime achievement award," and the winner does not receive a monetary prize. The recognition from Harvard University confers political and academic credibility that can be leveraged into additional funding, increased buy-in from potential partners and stakeholders, and a potential push to scale-up operations or inspire other partnerships in different regions.

The Roy Award Dataset and the Survey

The Roy Award process has resulted in the detailed evaluation of 43 partnerships that were selected as finalists over the course of eight two-year cycles (2003–2018). Partnerships varied in the number of partners (as few as two, to as many as several hundred), topic areas, governance structures and geographic regions (see Figure 8.1). Partnership categories have shifted over time, with the early award cycles dominated by projects focusing on forests or conservation and energy, while more recent cycles have become more diverse in topic areas. This change is a result of the breadth of partnership activities in recent years as well as a concerted effort to include a range of environmental projects in each slate of finalists.

The advantage of this set of partnerships to study questions of variable effectiveness is three-fold. First, the partnerships have already met baseline criteria for potential effectiveness including demonstrable, concrete progress toward achieving goals, innovation in their approach and collaborative process of partnering and transferability for additional higher-order impacts. Second, the evaluations contain historical information including why and how the partners came together, how they leveraged partners' strengths and resources, and a record of their stated goals. The final advantage is a practical matter. Since the collected information contained the names of the people working in the partnering organizations at the time the partnerships were active, these individuals served as survey participants and interview subjects. Given that web searches to determine the continued existence and evolution of the Roy Award partnerships proved inconclusive, these

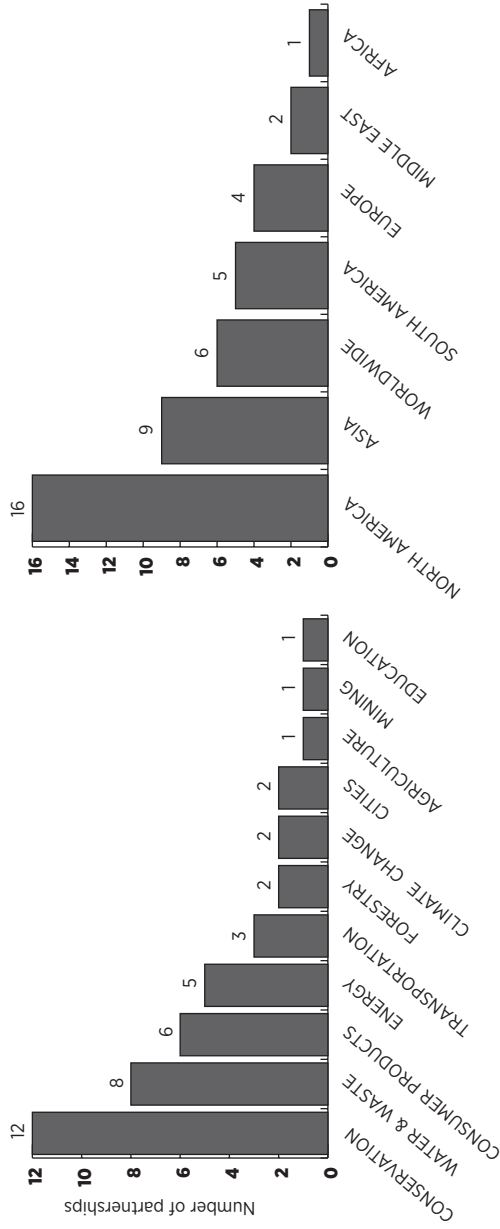


Figure 8.1 Roy Award partnerships by topic area and geographic region. Source: Authors.

survey and interviews provided a unique opportunity and data to examine questions of the durability and effectiveness of partnerships.

At the same time, the Roy Award partnership dataset has limitations. Some of the evaluations were prepared more than 15 years ago, so some information is outdated. Furthermore, many of the evaluations were conducted in the beginning and mid-life stages of the partnership and, in some cases, there are no data on actual goal attainment as opposed to aspirational or potential achievements. To determine if a partnership was still in existence or how it ended or evolved, we reached out to the individuals whose names we obtained from the original evaluations and asked them directly about the status of their partnership. To standardize our inquiry and gather richer information, we prepared an online survey questionnaire with one opening question: “Is the partnership operating today?” If the respondent answered no, they received a set of five additional questions about the partnership end date, the reason(s) why the partnership ended, goal attainment and value creation. If the respondent answered yes, they received a set of four distinct questions about goal attainment, how the partnership has changed and current and future challenges. The survey was designed to elicit answers to the following questions: why do some partnerships demonstrate effectiveness – in creating value in a durable manner and meeting their goals – while others fail to adapt to changing circumstances and shocks? What are the challenges partnerships face and how do partnerships change over time to overcome them in order to attain their goals and create value?

We contacted 134 individuals from 37 partnerships, finalists and winners from 2003 through 2016 (we did not survey the six finalists from the 2018 cycle since they had been recently evaluated). Out of the 37 total partnerships contacted, representatives of 27 partnerships responded. Forty-nine survey responses were received in total, of which 44 (i.e., 90 percent) were complete with usable information (Table 8.1).

After compiling the survey results, we divided the insights thematically into those pertaining primarily to challenges faced by the partnership and those illustrating the evolution of the partnership in response to such challenges. This helped us to understand the role of adaptability as a condition for partnership effectiveness and its influence on the ability of the partnerships to endure over time and meet their goals.

Case Study Selection

In order to delve more deeply into the specific dynamics of partnership adaptability, we conducted three case studies, selecting three partnerships that were sufficiently mature and with interview-accessible individuals. These case studies also represent three different levels of adaptability, as well as different ways through which the partners tried to attain their goals. We built each case study around interviews with people from as many partnering organizations as possible, a careful review of existing materials generated from the partnering organizations (annual reports, project documents) and external documentation from literature

Table 8.1 Roy Award finalists and winners, 2003–2018

<i>Partnership Name</i>	<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Exist Y/N/U*</i>	<i># Solicits</i>	<i># Resp.</i>	<i>Resp. Rate</i>
Great Printers Project	2003	Finalist	N	3	2	67%
Greening the Alwar District	2003	Finalist	U	1	0	0%
Noel Kempff Climate Action Project	2003	Winner	N	9	3	33%
Pingree Forest Partnership	2003	Finalist	N	3	3	100%
Sulabh Shauchalaya Complex	2003	Finalist	U	1	0	0%
			0%	17	8	47%
Eden Again Project	2005	Finalist	U	3	0	0%
EDF/FedEx Clean Delivery Truck Partnership	2005	Winner	N	5	2	40%
Green Neighborhoods – Open Space Residential Design	2005	Finalist	U	2	0	0%
CONABIO	2005	Finalist	U	0	0	/
Asian Conservation Awareness Program	2005	Finalist	U	2	0	0%
Governing the Amazon Timber Industry Program	2005	Finalist	U	3	0	0%
			0%	15	2	13%
California Dairy Quality Assurance Program	2007	Finalist	U	2	0	0%
Canadian Iraq Marshland Initiative	2007	Finalist	N	4	2	50%
Equator Initiative	2007	Finalist	Y	10	1	10%
Hybrid Systems for Rural Electrification in Africa (HSREA)	2007	Winner	N	1	1	100%
Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership	2007	Finalist	Y	1	1	100%
Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles	2007	Finalist	Y	1	1	100%
			50%	19	6	32%
Galápagos San Cristóbal Wind Project	2009	Finalist	N	8	2	25%
Mexico City Metrobús System	2009	Winner	Y	6	3	50%
Refrigerants, Naturally!	2009	Finalist	N	6	3	50%
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP)	2009	Finalist	Y	1	1	100%
SolarChill	2009	Finalist	Y	5	2	40%
World Economic Forum Water Initiative	2009	Finalist	Y	4	1	25%
			67%	30	12	40%
Coca-Cola and WWF Partnership	2011	Finalist	Y	4	1	25%

(Continued)

Table 8.1 Continued

<i>Partnership Name</i>	<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Exist Y/N/U*</i>	<i># Solicits</i>	<i># Resp.</i>	<i>Resp. Rate</i>
Millennium Water – Southeast False Creek Olympic Village	2011	Finalist	N	4	2	50%
Oro Verde - Green Gold	2011	Finalist	N	3	1	33%
Refrigerants, Naturally! **	2011	Winner*	N	6	3	50%
Registry of Socio- environmental Responsibility (RSR)	2011	Finalist	N	2	1	50%
Responsible Sourcing Initiative	2011	Finalist	N	2	1	50%
			17%	21	9	43%
Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement	2013	Finalist	N	4	1	25%
Dow-TNC Partnership on Ecosystem Services	2013	Winner	Y	6	4	67%
Malua Biobank	2013	Finalist	U	3	0	0%
Oro Verde**	2013	Finalist*	N	3	1	33%
Responsible Sourcing Initiative**	2013	Finalist*	N	2	1	50%
Vim Toilet Academy	2013	Finalist	U	1	0	0%
			17%	19	7	37%
Bangladesh Partnership for Cleaner Textile (PaCT)	2016	Finalist	Y	-	-	-
California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative	2016	Winner	Y	8	5	63%
Camden SMART Initiative	2016	Finalist	Y	5	1	20%
Global Forest Watch	2016	Finalist	U	3	0	0%
Global Methane Initiative	2016	Finalist	U	2	0	0%
Onondaga Lake Remediation and Restoration	2016	Finalist	Y	3	1	33%
Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles**	2016	Finalist*	Y	1	1	100%
			71%	22	8	36%
<i>2018 shortlisted partnerships not solicited</i>						
Advancing Green Infrastructure Program	2018	Winner				
Bangladesh PaCT**	2018	Finalist*				
Alianza Shire	2018	Finalist				
Bluetech Award Program	2018	Finalist				
Delaware River Watershed Initiative	2018	Finalist				
Clean Air Minnesota	2018	Finalist				

Source: Authors from Roy Award Finalists database

* Yes / No / Unknown **Repeat finalist

and news searches. As we developed the case studies, we organized the analysis along the following dimensions of effectiveness: (1) achievement of planned objectives and goals; (2) collaboration inside the partnership; and (3) durability and adaptability of the partnership over time.

Survey Results and Analysis

What Are the Main Challenges to Partnership Effectiveness?

In the survey, challenges stemming from political and legislative change were most commonly reported (nine respondents, from six out of 27 partnerships). Such challenges included changes in governments at either the national or subnational level. To meet these political challenges, the officials interviewed emphasized the importance of cultivating institutional support, engaging government partners and building sustainable support as an adaptive strategy for the partnership to survive electoral and business cycles (see Figure 8.2).

The second most common challenge encountered were barriers or obstacles that related to the specific project at hand (e.g., “illegal mining and corruption” in the instance of a fair-trade gold mining project or maintaining environmental monitoring standards on a pollution mitigation project).

The third most common category, “financing sustainability,” included a range of issues relating to fundraising, anticipating revenue streams or maintaining financial support from donors or partners. Unsurprisingly this was a common challenge, with just as many partnerships flagging it (six out of 27 partnerships)

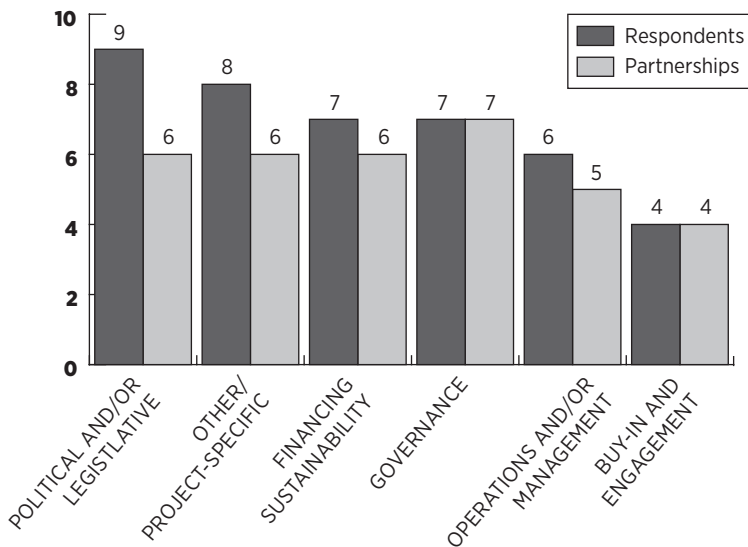


Figure 8.2 Most common challenges. Source: Authors, based on survey results.

as with “political and/or legislative change.” The next most common category, “governance-related change,” refers to both changes in the governing partners, such as new members of a project’s Board of Directors, and changes in the priorities of existing governing partners.

The category of “operations and/or management” included diverse problems, such as issues with “multi-jurisdictional communication and coordination,” decision making around resource allocation and compliance with or enforcement of partnership commitments. One of the survey respondents summed up both the values and challenges brought about by multi-sector partnerships: “Collaboration and partnerships create new opportunities for competitive advantage, open new markets, and broaden organizational capabilities [as well as] create a new set of management challenges.”

Lastly, several responses described the challenge of maintaining “buy-in and engagement.” For example, one partnership described its challenge as “to keep momentum after major achievements have been reached.” In contrast, another described “ensuring we continue to evolve to maintain relevance.” Two others described problems with maintaining “commitment” or effectiveness over long-time horizons. Here the commonality was centered around durability of engagement – meaning that the partnership faced obstacles in sustaining itself long enough to meet its goals.

How Do Partnerships Evolve and Adapt?

As partnerships endure over time and challenges arise, we can expect to see variable degrees of capacity and success in overcoming them. From this perspective, retaining flexibility and the capacity to evolve as their political and economic contexts change were generally considered very important conditions for partnership effectiveness across the survey’s participants. To gain an insight into the internal features and strategies that allow some partnerships to adapt and endure, our survey explicitly asked partnerships that still exist, “How has the partnership changed over time?” The results are summarized in Figure 8.3. The most common category was evolution in the governance structure, referring to either a change in the actual members representing the partnership or a more fundamental change in its governance arrangements. Interestingly, while changes in governance were common, they did not appear to be disruptive. One of the survey respondents noted, “The leaders from each of the participating companies, including myself, changed, but the fundamental enthusiasm has remained unchanged.” As illustrated by a second respondent, governance-related changes can even lead to the transformation of a partnership into another type of entity, such as transitioning from a project to a private-sector association. Contrary to being indicative of challenges faced by the partners, such an evolution may actually highlight that the partnership has achieved its objectives and become financially sustainable over the long term.

In addition to changes in governance, respondents also referenced changes in geographic scope with at least three partnerships expanding over a vaster

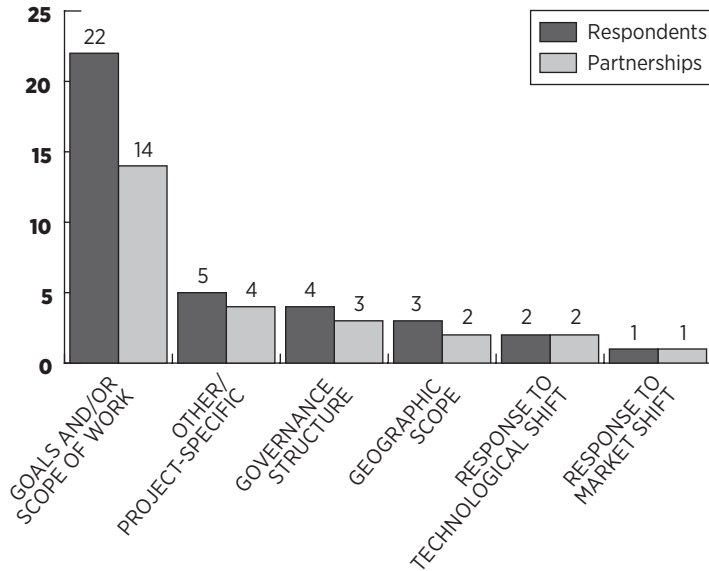


Figure 8.3 Most common types of evolution. Source: Authors, based on survey results.

jurisdiction. Two others described evolving in response to a technological advancement that required a new orientation. Finally, one respondent mentioned the need to change its business model to gain access to a different funding stream after the initial funding mechanism failed.

Case Studies

The Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project

The Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project, which takes its name from the Bolivian national park in which it was implemented, was the first winner of the Roy Family Award in 2003. Over its 19-year lifespan it faced a range of both specific and generalizable challenges and was one of four partnerships where different partners submitted contradictory answers to the first question in our survey (Is the partnership operating today? Y/N). According to the original design of the project, The Nature Conservancy (an international NGO) would partner with a local Bolivian non-profit (Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza) and then recruit corporate investors (American Electric Power, BP Amoco, PacifiCorp) to finance the acquisition of logging rights from timber companies on two million acres of forestland adjacent to the existing Noel Kempff Mercado National Park (established in 1979).

The objectives of the partnership included doubling the size of the park from approximately two million to four million acres. Once expanded and protected

from environmental degradation and deforestation, it would act as a carbon sink absorbing millions of tons of carbon emissions by protecting the park from logging, agricultural clearing and other activities. In return, corporate partners who paid to buy the concession (i.e., rights to the land previously owned by logging companies) were to receive 51 percent of certified carbon offsets over the project's 30-year intended life. The Bolivian Government was meant to receive 49 percent of the carbon benefits in return for closing the timber concessions for the project, and it pledged to use the income to fund community development and park management activities (The Nature Conservancy 2009). The partnership also included plans to form a venture company, Canopy Botanicals, to develop and market forest products. Lastly, the partnership was meant to accomplish an impressive range of objectives that involved investment in not only the upkeep and management of the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park itself but also human capital investments and scientific activities underlying the management and monitoring of protected and non-protected areas.

Based on information gathered from various interviews, the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project deviated from its expected objectives, intended duration and original governance structure. The most significant factor in the project's premature demise appears to be the political and legislative disruption associated with the election of Bolivian President Evo Morales in January 2006, approximately nine years into the project's lifecycle. The project advanced as planned for the first decade (1997–2006), and the president preceding Morales (President Eduardo Rodriguez) was a strong supporter. Morales was Bolivia's first indigenous President, espousing traditional beliefs about the sanctity of Madre Tierra (Mother Earth). He did not embrace the business model underlying the partnership, seen critically by some as "selling Mother Earth." The idea of commercializing the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park seemed fundamentally incompatible with the political values of the new administration. There was, in fact, a window of opportunity during which Morales and his administration were still open to the idea of the project, even though they wanted to renegotiate the terms. Unfortunately, the initial flexibility disappeared as his administration became convinced by other stakeholders to oppose the partnership outright.

In 2009, a highly critical report by Greenpeace, entitled "*Carbon Scam: Noel Kempff Climate Action Project and the Push for Sub-national Forests Offsets*" attacked the credibility of the local organizational partner, Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza, and the motivations of the corporate investors (AEP, BP America and PacifiCorp). Once it became clear that the Bolivian Government had no intention of ever commercializing their carbon offsets, the three corporate investors decided to permanently end their involvement in the project. This decision reportedly took place around 2012. Finally, in 2013, the Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza initiated project close-out, with an ultimate end to all activity in 2016.

Despite its ultimate failure, the partnership did produce one or more notable outcomes across its environmental, social, economic and scientific goals (summarized in Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Evaluation of the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project outcomes against its own goals

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Intended</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Environmental	Acquisition of concessions from logging companies to double the size of the park to 1,582,322 hectares.	Project was confirmed to still include the expanded area, meaning 809,371 hectares of land were effectively added to the national park. Adequacy of the monitoring and protection of the expanded protected area, however, is unknown.
	Avoid an estimated 7 million tons of CO ₂ over the 30-year life of the project.	Prevented 1,034,107 metric tons of verified CO ₂ emissions, which were estimated to have resulted from avoided logging and deforestation while the project was running between 1997 and 2005.
	Reduction in soil erosion and runoff into rivers from agricultural activities.	Concessions were successfully purchased and agricultural activities were effectively avoided for at least 13 years of the project, thus it can be assumed that there was some level of avoided soil erosion and runoff.
	Improved management of biodiversity.	64 species of birds, the maned wolf and marsh deer were all identified in the expanded area of the park but not present in the original park. Species' populations were successfully monitored in a Site Conservation Plan and then managed with an Integral Plan of Protection when the project was still in existence.
Social	Educational program for local community on sustainable farming and resources management techniques.	Schools for local indigenous communities were refurbished with project funding. Funding was provided for two teachers through the Municipality of San Ignacio. Project funding also was provided for educational supplies and scholarships for at least 120 primary and secondary students.
	Funding for various social programs to support impacted communities.	A Program for the Sustainable Development of Local Communities ran from 1997-2001 and claimed to improve access to health, education, and communication. A Community Development Program ran from 2002-2006.
	Funding for various infrastructure projects and programming.	Confirmation that a small airplane and landing strip was purchased for the project; current status of the plane and its associated infrastructure is unclear but likely no longer maintained.
	Legal and technical assistance to obtain land title for indigenous people.	Through effective legal advocacy, the project enabled successful attainment of legal status of "Communities of Native People" for indigenous communities living in the Park and a formal land title.

(Continued)

Table 8.2 Continued

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Intended</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Economic	Employment generation.	At least 11 new park rangers from the local communities were hired with funding of the program (duration of the employment is unclear). At least 80 community members were temporarily employed for surveying forest resources within and beyond the park expansion area. At least one indigenous community was financially worse off due to loss of sawmill jobs.
	Eco-tourism development.	Infrastructure developed to facilitate ecotourism (e.g., visitor center) was observed to be in disrepair in interviews; the remote location of the Park created considerable obstacles to facilitating tourism.
	Development and marketing of new forest products.	The proposed venture company was not commercially viable: Canopy Botanicals produced low returns on investment, and investors had to incur additional costs to dissolve the business.
	Micro-enterprises for heart of palm and mahogany plantings, agroforestry projects, animal husbandry, etc.	Concessions were obtained for a heart-of-palm business on 11,000 hectares and sustainable forestry on 90,000 hectares; this created the first timber selling point in the Department of Santa Cruz run by an indigenous community. It was not confirmed to have been profitable or still in existence. As of 2009, the timber business was not profitable.
Broader technical impacts	Advances in carbon stock measurement methods and research on the impact of logging on carbon sequestration.	The partnership was one of the first REDD+ projects (aimed at Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in Developing countries), contributing to the body of knowledge on REDD+ verification standards and approaches. The project also advanced the use of carbon accounting, remote sensing technology and carbon benefit modeling, but third-party verification of avoided emissions ended prematurely.

Source: Authors, based on interviews and available documents (Asquith, Vargas Ríos and Smith 2002; Angeleri 2009; The Nature Conservancy 2009, 2010).

Given that the project did not endure for its expected 30-year duration, however, it is clear that the partnership was at least partly unable to adapt to emerging implementation challenges and changes in contextual factors and, thus, did not meet its sustainability objectives. The monitoring and verification scheme did not continue beyond 2005. Various aspects of the social programming and microenterprise efforts also collapsed relatively early in the project's lifespan. Additionally, the governance structure, implementation activities and underlying business model were effectively disrupted by the new Bolivian administration.

At the same time, there were other dimensions of the partnership that showed a certain degree of adaptability and outlasted the project's premature demise. In particular, the partners established, as part of its financing mechanisms, an endowment fund for the benefit of the park management activities (monitoring, protection, park rangers, infrastructure), which is reportedly still in use for the protection and management of the expanded national park. They also created an institutional infrastructure that was able to endure. The Noel Kempff project enlisted the support of a local partner, *Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza*, which was able to stay engaged in the project even after the other partners left. A stakeholder from *The Nature Conservancy* revealed that "The most important decision *The Nature Conservancy* ever makes is who do we partner with? Are they 'hired hands' or are they partners?" In the case of the *Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza*, *The Nature Conservancy* clearly made an effort to identify an organization that was strong and active.

The Mexico City Metrobús

The Mexico City Metrobús project is a partnership created to develop Mexico City's first Bus Rapid Transit line; a busway with dedicated lanes and protected stations, which has since evolved into a seven-line Metrobús system. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as Mexico City leaders looked for ways to reduce emissions, improve public health and increase mobility in a congested city prone to poor air quality, lower cost solutions like Bus Rapid Transit emerged. The Shell Foundation was interested in investing in transport and energy solutions in cities in low- and middle-income countries. An initial USD 7.5 million grant established EMBARQ, the World Resources Institute (WRI) Centre for Transport and the Environment. In Mexico, the Centre for Sustainable Transport (CTS), which represented EMBARQ's Mexico City office, worked with private funders, international NGOs and local and national leaders in Mexico and the Mexico City region to establish Metrobús, a public agency formed under the Secretary of Transportation. Through leveraging international expertise, private funding and political buy-in, EMBARQ-CTS developed and implemented the first Metrobús line. This route ran along Insurgentes Avenue, a highly utilized thoroughfare underserved by public transit but with 262 private microbus owners operating concessions along the route. In 2005, Line 1 of Metrobús was launched, and in the years that followed, six more lines were implemented. Key to laying the groundwork for the route was communicating with existing mini-bus operators and other

stakeholders. Strong governmental leadership helped build project consensus, with additional organizations providing assistance specific to certain aspects of the project – developing a train platform, working on education or meeting with specific constituents. The success of the Bus Rapid Transit corridor required that Metrobús would be given exclusive access to the Insurgentes route, which meant microbus operators would no longer be able to operate there. More than 200 “one man, one bus” concessionaires were ultimately consolidated into a larger cooperative (Corridor Insurgentes, S.A. or CISA) as part owners and employees of Metrobús. Today the city’s Passenger Transport Network works with CISA to operate the Metrobús (Francke, Macías and Schmid 2012).

Although private and NGO investment financed much of the planning and implementation costs, the Mexican Government funded the development of the stations and the purchase of the buses. Most of the subsequent Metrobús lines were funded by the government. After Lines 1 and 2 were completed, many of the private funders and NGOs involved at the outset assumed smaller roles and were eventually phased out as the organization became fully operational. Over time, Metrobús grew as a unique organization, and EMBARQ-CTS was folded into WRI’s Ross Center for Sustainable Cities, where it continues to provide technical assistance to environmental and transit projects in Mexico. Private funders, like Shell and the Hewlett Foundation, completed their initial work and eventually moved on to new projects. In 2014, the Hewlett Foundation shifted its funding portfolio out of Mexico entirely. The World Bank is no longer an active partner in Metrobús but funds other environmental projects in the region.

Today, Mexico City’s Metrobús system is seen as an example of a successful Bus Rapid Transit project and serves approximately 1.5 million daily riders (see Table 8.3 for a summary of outcomes). Metrobús moved very quickly from conception to implementation with Line 1 starting operation just three years after initial discussions. The Bus Rapid Transit reduced travel times substantially along the Insurgentes Corridor with improvements on most lines of between 40 and 50 percent. Travel speeds increased and, based on survey data, 15 percent of users shifted from private vehicles to public transportation. Emissions reductions for the seven-line system are estimated at around 160,000 tons of CO₂ per year. However, these estimates are generally not based on direct measurement and Mexico City-wide emission reductions have also been pursued through a slew of other policy efforts besides Metrobús. A 2007 World Bank study showed that a 10-corridor system had the potential to reduce air emissions between 300,000 and 500,000 tons per year (Vergara and Haeussling 2007).

In contrast to the Noel Kempff partnership, most of the Metrobús project has endured through evolution and growth, even though the initial partnerships have largely dissolved. Metrobús is an independent transit organization that continues to expand its services, having moved from one to seven lines. Although it faces ongoing questions of revenue adequacy and management capacity, it is integrated into Mexico City’s central budget and has the political support to continue. There are eight other Bus Rapid Transit systems across the country, suggesting that its basic concept was replicable in different regions. For the partnering organizations,

Table 8.3 Evaluation of the Metrobús outcomes against its own goals

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Intended</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Environmental	Reduce emissions from automobiles in Mexico City and the region.	Reduced over 100,000 tons carbon dioxide equivalent in first three years, about 40,000 a year since. Estimated 10 percent modal shift or reduction of vehicles. 1,108 old one-bus units replaced by cleaner Metrobús fleet.
Social	Encourage more Mexico City residents to commute via public transit instead of private vehicles. Improve working conditions for Insurgentes bus drivers.	As of 2007, Metrobús ridership was 220,000 daily riders. Current estimates are 600,000 daily riders on Line 1, and 1.5 million across all 7 lines. 15 percent of Metrobús riders shifted from car or taxi. Driver shifts reduced from 12 hours to 8 hours on average. Routes are standardized.
Economic	Expand transit options at a much lower cost than subway lines. Bus Rapid Transit costs USD 0.5 to 15 million per kilometer. Underground metros USD 45 to 320 million per kilometer. Reduce commuting times to grow economic activity.	Infrastructure and fleet costs (public and private) for Line 1 were USD 157 million, about USD 8 million per kilometer. 50 percent reduction in travel times on Line 1, and 50 and 40 percent on Lines 2 and 3, respectively. Estimated 180 million worker hours of productivity created. Fares are directed to a trust fund and reinvested in Metrobús.
Political and Institutional	Support Mexico City's Climate Action Plan and grow political support for environmental and transit projects.	Development of a Program to Improve Air Quality as well as a Climate Action Plan (2008). A Second Climate Action Plan is in place today.
Scientific and Technical	Demonstrate the feasibility of Bus Rapid Transit as a transit solution. Utilize emissions reductions climate credits as a funding stream.	Successfully proved concept of Bus Rapid Transit; EMBARQ worked on similar projects in eight additional Mexican cities. Utilized climate funding as a small part of revenue until 2017, when fund phased out.

Source: Authors, based on interviews and available documents (Hidalgo and Carrigan 2010; Vilchis, Tovar and Flores 2010; World Bank 2009).

Metrobús generally allowed their sustainable transport portfolio to grow. WRI, for instance, has expanded its reach and now works with many other cities on transport projects. Private funders have shifted their funding approaches, allowing new projects to be developed.

An important element of this success has been the capacity of the partnership to build political will and bring in technical expertise, as well as to connect private funders to the project. For example, EMBARQ oversaw several private grants that were all used for this project, centralizing investment. At the same time, with strong political leadership from Claudia Sheinbaum (then-Secretary of the Environment of Mexico and current Mexico City mayor) and former mayors Marcelo Ebrard and Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador (who was then elected President in 2018), the project was pushed through the approval process and received continuous support for its expansion.

Alianza Shire: Energy Access to Refugees

Alianza Shire was initially conceived in 2011 and formally established in 2014 to improve conditions in refugee camps in the Shire region of Ethiopia by deploying reliable, efficient electricity infrastructure. This partnership, between the Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Norwegian Refugee Council and energy companies (Iberdrola, a Spanish multinational energy utility, Acciona.org, the foundation arm of Acciona, and Signify, a global lighting company), was aided by the participation of a third-party facilitator, the Innovation and Technology for Development Centre at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (itdUPM). After a significant preparation phase, the partnership launched a pilot project in the Adi-Harush camp in Shire, Ethiopia, successfully bringing energy improvements to 8,000 Eritrean refugees. The project is now continuing into its second phase by expanding into three additional refugee camps in the region.

All Alianza Shire partner organizations have direct funding or implementation roles, with the exception of the itdUPM. In what turned out to be an innovative step, the partners hired experts at the university to facilitate interactions among the partners (substantially increasing the flexibility of the governance structures) and also to provide technical support for monitoring and evaluation. The preparation phase of the project lasted two years and resulted in a clear Memorandum of Understanding, funding structures, and guidance principles based on the notions of transparency and shared governance. This process created a three-tiered governance structure (steering, technical, and communications) and designed clear procedures to resolve disputes and periodically evaluate the project and its functions.

Organizations contributed staff to all three governance tiers, based on their expertise. Within each committee, specific plans were developed to guide work, with the steering committee making final decisions. The itdUPM ensured regular meetings of each committee and encouraged the development of cross-partnership

communications tools to keep the partnership informed. This structure continues today as the project moves to its second phase. The energy companies led on technology, materials sourcing and training. UNHCR and the Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation played an institutional role for broader project support. The Norwegian Refugee Council was not part of the original partnership development, though later played an important implementation role and served on several of the committees. In the pilot phase, the Norwegian Refugee Council also worked directly to build the capacity of the Ethiopian Energy Utility company, even though a new implementing partner (ZOA International) is expected to take over the Council's role in the second phase.

In terms of its impacts, the Alianza Shire partnership showed proof of concept for this type of energy infrastructure in humanitarian settings. The project achieved its training and installation goals in the Adi-Harush camp pilot project, bringing electricity to 8,000 refugees, installing 63 LED streetlight fixtures and providing training to on-the-ground maintenance staff (Rojo et al. 2017). A neutral partnership facilitator (itdUPM) was seen to play a particularly critical role, by taking responsibility for work that did not clearly fall to other organizational partners, as well as providing full research and evaluation support to identify challenges as they emerged.

In assessing the impacts of the partnership, itdUPM clarified that "the objectives of the partnership must be differentiated from those of the first phase pilot." Both aspects saw successes, but questions relating to long-term implementation, evaluation and measurement remain (see Table 8.4), especially as implementation took longer than initially anticipated due to administrative and technical challenges.

Many of the remaining challenges are expected to be addressed in the second phase of the project, which demonstrates partners' attempts to adapt the partnership's dynamics and engage in a learning-by-doing approach. First, insufficient on-the-ground engagement was noted as an important obstacle to implementation, and a new partner (ZOA International) was brought in. Secondly, in the pilot phase, the refugee camps themselves were the focus, while the link between the camps and their host communities was not considered. Moving forward, this was also identified as a problem to be corrected in the second phase by expanding solar electricity systems and training to households and businesses in host communities. Third, a key challenge was described as the long-term funding and maintenance of the projects after installation and once the implementing organizations have moved on. The financing responsibilities of the pilot project have progressively become the responsibility of a local NGO, but the partnership is still working to identify sustainable models for the second phase that would not require an ongoing commitment from the partnering organizations. Finally, the assessment of the first phase of the project provided only preliminary results, while scaling up a project often demands quick and more detailed turnarounds. The goals of an agile pilot process and the rigor of a traditional academic institution (in this case, itdUPM) can find themselves at odds, curtailing the project's ability to incorporate feedback.

Table 8.4 Evaluation of the Alianza Shire outcomes against its own goals

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Intended</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Environmental	Improvement of electricity grid in host community and refugee camps to reduce wood-burning emissions and wood harvesting. Installation of street lighting. Training for maintenance.	63 LED streetlights installed, covering 4 kilometers. Indoor lighting in 7 communal kitchens. Two public street boxes. Estimated 1,500 fewer tons of firewood collected. Estimated 2,000 tons reduction in CO ₂ .
Social	Employment of host community members and refugees in installation and maintenance. Training in business management and service provision. Increased safety at night. Coordination between entities on energy, education, and gender issues. 8,000 refugees impacted in pilot phase.	19 refugees and host community members trained. Estimated 60% reduction in nighttime robberies. Training for Ethiopian Electrical Utility staff. Local actors involved in implementation but not at the strategic level.
Economic	Connection of local businesses to grid. Increased employment in camps. Cost savings over diesel purchase.	Cost savings from diesel estimated at USD 37,000 per year. Four long-term training participants employed.
Political and Institutional	Establish coordination group and relationships with local authorities. Utilize pilot project to evaluate success of future projects.	After successful pilot project in Adi-Harush camp, the partnership will expand to three additional sites.
Scientific and Technical	Provide technical and managerial capacity and training to local stakeholders.	Technical experts trained and brought together. Multiple case studies and evaluations performed to share with broader communities.

Source: Authors, based on interviews and available documents (Rojo et al. 2017).

Adaptability and Pathways to Effectiveness

The three partnerships presented in these three case studies were recognized by the Roy Award program as having high effectiveness potential at the time of their evaluation. The extent to which they lived up to their potential, however, varies across the cases. Tables 8.2–8.4 illustrate some of the main outcomes of the partnerships across the environmental, social, economic, political and scientific and technical domains. In turn, these outcomes can be assessed against the pathways of effectiveness that have been conceptualized in the volume’s analytical framework (Chapter 1). On the one hand, the shortened duration of the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project limited its ability to meet its own long-term goals in terms

of avoided emissions from deforestation (Pathway 1 of the analytical framework) and mostly failed to create value for the partners (Pathway 2). Similarly, since certified carbon offsets could never be commercialized, its intended catalytic effect on the uptake of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) projects by other institutions did not materialize (Pathway 5). Moreover, it is unclear whether the potentially positive impacts that the project had on the protection of biodiversity in the national park and on the livelihoods of local communities (including the attainment of formal land titles and the creation of socio-economic opportunities) have been sustained since the termination of the partnership (Pathway 4). On the other hand, the Metrobús and Alianza Shire partnerships can be seen as more successful experiences. In addition to achieving their own goals, both partnerships created successful proofs of concept that could be replicated by other institutions, e.g., the Bus Rapid Transit projects in other Mexican cities and those promoted through the portfolio of WRI; and the additional refugee camps to which the Alianza Shire project was expanded. They also created significant value for and increased collaboration between the partners, as well as producing positive impacts on affected constituencies, e.g., Mexico City's commuters and bus drivers and the refugees in and host community members of the Adi-Harush camps.

Based on the case studies, it is possible to argue that the progress of the partnerships was closely dependent on their capacity to learn and adapt in response to both initial shortcomings and intermediate shocks. Importantly, such a capacity appeared to be only partly related to the purported nature of partnerships as more flexible and experimentalist institutions (De Burca et al. 2014; Andonova 2017). More significantly, the variable presence of sophisticated partnering and governance arrangements that enabled learning and adaptation, building capacity for ongoing evaluation and flexible decision making, emerged in our case studies as an important precondition for overcoming challenges to partnership implementation. This is in line with the main propositions on conditions for effectiveness, that are internal to the structuring of partnerships as elaborated in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1. As we compare the results of our analysis and suggest some transferable lessons, we bring in some examples of other partnerships in our dataset for additional context.

As we saw in the Noel Kempff case study, the election of the Morales administration catalyzed disruptive changes in the project's governance structure and created major stakeholder engagement problems, which then led to the partnership's early demise. Importantly, these three issues – political change, governance structure change and an inability to sustain stakeholder engagement – were also among the most commonly cited challenges in our partnership surveys. The Noel Kempff case thus illustrates how there might be substantial challenges in sustaining partnership through all phases of the partnership life cycle. The approach and start-up phases take a long time to get right, which can cause frustration and deplete initial partnership resources. Once partnerships make it through the implementation phase, scaling-up the original concept to full implementation requires overcoming several financial challenges. Some partnerships fail to establish a sustainable

financial base and thus cannot cover their start-up costs. Others rely on the promise of available financing that does not materialize, thus undermining the original business proposition that initially motivated the partners. The Noel Kempff partnership failed to capitalize on two of its projected revenue streams. First, it was denied access to carbon credits, in part, because of the ideological dispute with the Bolivian government. Second, it failed to launch a forest products venture company, curtailing project activities that would have contributed to the partnership meeting its social and environmental goals. Similarly, another partnership in our Roy Award database, the Registry of Socio-environmental Responsibility, counted on funding from REDD+ that failed to materialize, so the partnership had to change its financing model from limited-duration foundation funds (given in anticipation of REDD+) to one more reliant on corporate contracts.

For other partnerships, scaling up often depended on a market that did not yet exist. For example, the Hybrid Systems for Rural Electrification in Africa partnership was built on a system to deliver electricity generated by solar energy and bio-fuel from feedstock grown and processed locally. Scaling up the system required tapping into a larger biofuel market that did not expand as anticipated; this ultimately compromised the success of the project. Likewise, the initial phases of the Oro Verde partnership required funding from outside organizations (foundations, NGOs), but their financial sustainability plan hinged on creating a market for sustainable, ethically produced gold. Their auction of certified gold failed to attract sufficient bidders, undermined by a high gold price and the added pressure of having to manage the corruption that pervaded the industrial mining sector in Columbia at that time, which made it impossible for their product to compete.

Each of these projects was unable to transition to a financially sustainable phase of operation. Other impediments to scale-up include a failure to meet the required economies of scale for corporate partners, inadequate commitment of resources from partners and champions, fatigue and burnout and the inability to replicate results in a different context. For example, the goal of the Future Vehicles Project (between FedEx and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)) was to replace FedEx's fleet of 30,000 local delivery trucks with hybrid vehicles over ten years, thereby creating a market for hybrid trucks. The partnership's selection for the Roy Award was based on its success at pushing cutting-edge technology into the market and the potential for widespread replication, but FedEx ultimately did not meet its commitment. The company needed the hybrid trucks to be cost-competitive with the standard truck over its lifetime and the engine manufacturer needed a commitment for a large order to bring the price of the vehicle down. The partners acknowledged that the FedEx-EDF project took a long time from concept to demonstration, and perhaps the partners could have done more to accelerate the process, scale up faster and create more momentum in the sector to make the trucks cost-effective. These actions did not happen.

Other partnerships that ran into obstacles in the scale-up phase include the Responsible Sourcing Initiative, led by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to reduce the environmental impact of consumer goods manufacturing through its "Clean by Design" program. NRDC established an assessment model

and worked to promote best practices throughout its partners' supply chains and increase transparency and disclosure in China. Meaningful participation by brands to push for environmental improvements in the supply chain was the biggest challenge to scaling up the program. After working with more than 100 factories over 10 years, NRDC no longer leads the program, which has transitioned to a private-sector trade association.

Taken together, these examples show that a crucial element of partnership adaptability is the ability to anticipate and prepare for potential political and/or legislative changes (or the lack thereof) through a partnership's initial governance arrangements. When this does not happen, it is not guaranteed that a change of course would be successful in responding to shocks. For example, key elements of the Metrobús partnership's evolution were its early consultation with the micro-bus owners; its alignment with the city's environmental and social priorities that were necessary for continued political support; and the success of its first phase of implementation, which further increased adaptability and support through a demonstration effect (consistent with Andonova 2017). On the contrary, the Noel Kempff project tried to work with local stakeholders and to solidify the support of the government, but this was not sufficient. At least one project stakeholder believed more should have been done to engage with the Morales administration at an earlier stage, while it was still open to the possibility of a renegotiated deal. According to our case studies, a potential means of future-proofing partnerships could, for example, include the creation of sustainable financing mechanisms capable of outlasting changes in partnership governance. In the Noel Kempff case, the revenue from the sale of emission reduction credits to the Bolivian Government was undermined when the latter refused to commercialize such credits, and yet the project achieved some protection by creating an endowment fund which outlasted the partnership itself.

Conclusions

The range of partnerships in the Roy Award database spans 16 years, a diversity of topics, locations, governance structures, operational configurations and institutions. Our analysis of this database, together with the three selected case studies, shows that partnerships, once formed, are difficult to sustain long enough to create value and meet their goals. While each partner brings different skills, experiences and resources to a project, each also has different cultures, priorities and needs. Moreover, internal and external factors will change over time, making some partnerships unsustainable. These obstacles are likely to be exacerbated as partnerships become more complex and inclusive in terms of the number and types of organizations and institutions that are included. Across the Roy Award dataset, the difficulty in responding to legislative and political changes, establishing sustainable financing mechanisms and ensuring effective partnership operations and collaboration represented the three most commonly cited problems.

In this chapter, we have explored how the partnerships included in the dataset have sought to overcome such problems and whether a partnership's dynamic of adapting and exhibiting learning-by-doing has helped mitigate challenges. Our results broadly align with Proposition 3 in this volume's analytical framework, which hypothesizes that partnership adaptability may be a determinant of greater partnership effectiveness, all other aspects remaining equal. First, the survey results suggest that adaptation may take different forms, ranging from changes in governance structures and business models to the modification of a project's geographic scope to better match the spatial dimensions of the problem the partnership is trying to solve. Secondly, our findings also suggest that such adaptations do make a difference in terms of partnership effectiveness. On the one hand, the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project partnership did not adequately prepare for potentially unanticipated challenges to its business model and allegedly also failed to learn and respond quickly to such challenges (for example, by not engaging with the Bolivian Government when it was reportedly open to renegotiating a deal for the project). The part of the partnership that did endure was precisely the endowment fund component of its financing strategy, representing an early attempt to build partnership resilience and insulate it from changing circumstances. On the other hand, the Metrobús and Alianza Shire initiatives have attained their goals due, in part, to their capacity to anticipate, plan for and adapt to changing circumstances. Lastly, our case studies illustrate how adaptability, as a condition for partnership effectiveness, is intrinsically linked to other aspects of partnership structuring. These include the development of initial governance arrangements that are flexible enough to accommodate changes in funding streams, political context and partners' composition, as well as the establishment of learning mechanisms that can facilitate and guide adaptation by leveraging the inherent flexibility of partnership arrangements.

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