

Creating a better Fit

Improving scoping and brokering of Cross Sector partnering processes

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Abstract

Partnership Brokers play an increasingly important role in the creation and support of cross sector partnerships for sustainable development (CSPs). By 2016, there operated more than 300 PBA accredited partnership brokers in the world. They can perform various functions throughout the entire partnering cycle, from an initial situational analysis, via matchmaking towards management guidance even into the dissolution of partnerships. The actual way these brokers enact these supportive functions has received relatively limited systematic scientific attention in particular regarding the various roles partnership brokers can play in creating a proper ‘fit’ between the type of problems that brokers address and the partnership constellation that they are able to organize. This contribution develops an analytical framework that CSP brokers can utilize to create a better fit between issue and partnership in the formation or scoping phase of partnering.

1. Introduction: an important, but fragmented area

Since the turn of the millennium, cross sector partnerships (CSP) for sustainable development have become particularly popular. The plethora of problems that can arise before, during and after the formation of CSPs (Kolk et al., 2008; Stoteler et al, 2014) provides a logical call for partnership experts who can convene potential partners and support them during the partnering process (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Stadtler & Probst, 2012). For many centuries, brokers and brokerage firms have functioned as acknowledged intermediaries in buying and selling transactions within the same sector or supply chain. But in CSPs they present a relatively recent phenomenon. Nevertheless they are generally considered of great importance for successful partnerships by practitioners and academics alike (Manning & Roessler, 2013; Stadtler & Probst, 2012). Developing agencies are becoming more like brokers themselves (Gombra, 2013). Brokers can be more than one person at a time, can come within or outside of the organization (Tennyson, 2005), can come from any sector (Tennyson, 2012) while taking

different positions (Gould&Fernandez, 1989) inside and outside organizations. As mediators, brokers facilitate the interaction between the partners, but also with other external organizations. As learning catalyst, brokers help partnerships with their knowledge and experience in cross-sector partnerships, in order to catalyze their functioning and increase their impact (ibid). Some practitioners also mention the possibility of brokers to engage in a role as a partnership manager (Serafin, 2006). Each of these roles has its advantages and disadvantages.

The relevance of in particular CSP brokers has tremendously increased over the past decades, due to the recognition that the problems that society has to address, belong more and more to the realm of complex or so-called ‘wicked problems’, i.e. problems that are not only difficult address because of different interests with stakeholders, but also because of difficulties in defining the actual problem (Rittel and Webber, 1997; Van Tulder and Keen, 2018). Wicked problems appear because solutions cannot be found in any of the traditional societal sectors (civil society, state, market) and thus require engagement of actors from multiple sectors resulting in the demand for cross sector partnerships (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Selsky & Parker, 2006; Kolk et al. 2008). Wicked problems create so-called ‘institutional voids’ in which none of the societal actors has been able - or willing - to take action and create new formal or informal ‘rules of the game’ (North, 2002). One particularly relevant dimension defining the effectiveness of partnership brokers is, therefore, to check whether they actually have impact on addressing these wicked problems. Making this question practical requires a clear understanding of what brokers actually do and how they can align different interests around a common vision (Van Tulder & Kahlen, 2015; Kahlen & Van Tulder, 2015). This applies in particular to the role that CSP brokers can adopt in the start-up or formation phase of partnerships. This is generally acknowledged to be the most important phase of any partnership aimed at transformational challenges (Tennyson, 2012; PrC, 2015).

The majority of academic publications does recognize the potential of brokers in particular for addressing cross-sector issues (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006; Googins & Rochlin, 2000). The literature includes qualifications for CSP brokers as “boundary-spanning leaders with credibility” (Bryson et al, 2006: 46), ‘social agents’ (Serafin, 2006), as “a key factor facilitating collective action” (Selsky & Parker, 2005: 856), as ‘change makers who span cross-sector boundaries’ (Waddock, 2010; Tennyson, 2011), as conveners of partnerships (Sharma & Kearins, 2011), of intergovernmental collaboration (Lackey et al., 2002), of networks (Brass et al., 2004) or as mediators in conflicts (e.g. Bardach, 1998). Despite the increased importance

given to the role of CSP brokers, a systematic search on publications on CSP brokers results in relatively few academic papers on the topic (Kahlen and Van Tulder, 2015; Lee, 2015). Complementary insights about the actual practice of CSP brokers can be found in publications by organizations engaged in partnership brokering themselves and their own research activities. Hardly any of these publications is based on validated research, largely anecdotal or case based, although often containing compendia of research in adjoining areas that can indeed be considered ‘established’. There exists also a considerable degree of auto-quotation in which guides refer to the same source (sometimes without mentioning). The most renowned of these sources is the Tool Book (2003) and Brokering Guidebook by Tennyson (2005). Most consecutive publications by the Partnership Brokers Association (PBA) build further on the approaches and concepts from The Brokering Guidebook, and explain further ‘what partnership brokers do’ (Tennyson, 2012), their profile (Tennyson, 2011), or give examples on how the concepts helped in practice (Pyres, 2013 and Tennyson, 2013).

The terminology surrounding CSP brokers is not without ambiguity either. Many names are still interchangeably used in practice (PBA, 2011), which in turn hints at the ambiguous position of these intermediaries. Apparent synonyms include mediator (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Wood, 2012), negotiator (e.g. Meyer, 2011), facilitator (Stadtler & Probst, 2012; Fife & Hosman, 2007), process manager, partnership intermediaries (PBA, 2011), change leader (PBA, 2011; Tennyson, 2005), co-coordinator (Tennyson, 2012) or connectors, co-designers and learning catalysts (Lee, 2015). In the end, most of these can be regarded as role descriptions the broker might hold. In practice they lead to confusion as well as to conflicts when not addressed appropriately.

The present state-of-knowledge on CSP brokers presents an interesting clash between practical insights, established training practices and modest scientific research. This makes a systematic discussion on enhancing the function of CSP brokers particularly challenging. Brokers moreover present a moving target. They can be engaged in a large number of activities for many different stakeholders under very diverse circumstances. Extant academic and practitioner’s literature on CSP brokers (Kahlen and Van Tulder, 2015) presents a spaghetti bowl of techniques, insights and visions on what CSP brokering could entail. The number of validated ideas of which techniques actually work best, who should do it under what circumstances, for which problem and in which phase of the partnering cycle, remains limited. Most insights that

guide the actual practice of brokers are prescriptive and practitioner oriented while rarely based on systematic scientific research (ibid).

Bearing in mind these concerns, we argue that the question how brokers can improve their operations can perhaps best be addressed by considering the various roles they can adopt in the formation phase of a partnership – and link that to the various types of partnering that an effective approach towards the issue requires. We call this the ‘fit’ challenge. This ambition involves on the one hand a better understanding of the roles partnership brokers can adopt, but on the other hand a better understanding of the particular fit partnership brokers are supposed to establish between the issues, the partners and the context in which they operate. In the broker literature this challenge is often referred to as the ‘scoping’ or the ‘convening’ function of partnering. When a proper fit between the partnership and the issue can be established, the impact of the broker throughout the entire partnering cycle – and ultimately the impact of the whole partnership - can be seriously enhanced (Stadtler and Probst, 2012; Van Tulder et al, 2016). It has been widely acknowledged that the way brokers create trust, discover shared interests and expectations (McEvily & Zaheer, 2004), use social capital and bridge structural holes through “weak ties” (von Schnurbein, 2010) are located in the earlier phases of the partnership. In these phases also the majority of mistakes in proper partnership formation appear (Frost&Sullivan, 2013). Scoping and resource/capability mapping are applied to assess whether partnering is a viable and attractive possibility, in comparison to classical ‘going-it-alone’ solutions or other forms of collaboration. Correct scoping applies to a correct assessment of the wickedness of the issue and type of partnership that is most appropriate to addressing the issue. Brokers should consider an ‘issue fit’ and an ‘organizational fit’. To identify the most relevant skills and techniques CSP brokers can use, one need to define the type of ‘institutional void’ partners are trying to overcome.

This contribution therefore continues as follows: sections 2 and 3 further elaborate the brokering challenge that CSP brokers in the scoping or start-up phase of cross-sector partnerships face. Section 4 discusses the more specific challenge to create a ‘fit’ between issue and partnership by considering the type of institutional void to be bridged. Each fit creates a different context in which a broker might be required to use different roles. Section 5, finally, defines challenges ahead for brokers to further develop these more sophisticated scoping skills.

2. Defining the initial CSP brokering challenge

Cross sector partnerships aimed at wicked problem – ideally - build upon the complementary strengths of each sector, compensate for mutual weaknesses, share risks and/or define areas for shared interest articulation. All partnerships require an exchange and/or accumulation of a large number of divergent characteristics of organizations: (1) ideas, (2) visions, (3) capabilities and competencies, (4) commitment, (5) risks, (6) values, (7) responsibilities, (9) networks of weak and strong ties, (10) power relations, (11) mindsets, (12) individuals, (13) organizational cultures (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Lackey et al., 2002; Bryson et al., 2006; Austin & Seitanidi, 2013; Seitanidi & Crane, 2014, Kahlen & Van Tulder, 2015). What brokers have to broker, therefore, includes a large variety of dimensions all needed (in various combinations) for the successful formation of partnerships. Ultimately, the most important of these dimensions can arguably be considered the brokering of interests (Van Tulder & Pfisterer, 2014; Tennyson, 2003; Purdy, 2012) in the creation of value through social coalitions (Lee, 2015). The fundamental question brokers have to address in the formation phase thus relates to a proper identification where and why the creation of value in societies is underserved.

Different interests related to different value propositions are thereby a key characteristic of the three distinct sectors that are supposed to collaborate in cross-sector partnerships: (1) the public sector produces public goods and values and therefore represents the non-excludable and non-rival public interests, (2) the market sector produces private goods and values, representing excludable and rival private interests, whereas (3) the civil or social sector produces social (or club) goods and values, representing (partially) excludable and non-rival social interests (Van Tulder & Pfisterer, 2014). The partnership then becomes a means to bridge the institutional ‘divide’ or ‘void’ between sectors ((Rivera-Santos et al., 2012), by the creation of new interdependencies and an institutional space (Bierman et al., 2007: 288). At the same time, this implies that the envisaged ‘partnering space’ also represents a contested political arena (Mert & Chan, 2012; Utting, 2012), a bargaining arena in which conflict and power struggles are exercised (Gray, 2007; Ellersiek, 2011) in which it is conceivable that one sector uses the partnership to exercise power and influence over other domains (Buse&Harmer, 20054) or as an action primarily for self-interest (Selsky & Parker, 2010).

There is evidence that existing power asymmetries in the partnering space are replicated in the partnership – certainly when they are not well-designed as is the case with many unfocused

‘multi-stakeholder engagement’ processes. Engagement often appears between so-called ‘coalitions of the willing’, but might not include ‘coalitions of the needed’, i.e. stakeholders that are relevant either in their identity as causing a problem or contributing to its solution (Van Tulder and Keen, 2018). Multi-stakeholder processes representing parties from all three sectors, are furthermore often characterized by asymmetries in power (Elbers & Dewulf, 2012). Partnerships between unequal partners (i.e. with a skewed dependency relationship) run the risk of replicating vested interests rather than lead to significant changes. Mert and Chan - studying UNCSD partnerships - conclude that “partnerships potentially reassert existing power imbalances by only involving actors that are already seen as significant” (Mert & Chan, 2012: 27). This finding has been reiterated by Bäckstrand (2006) who studied the partnerships formed after the 2002 Johannesburg conference, and concluded that they reinforced rather than transformed current power imbalances.

Partnerships are often struck for moral and societal reasons, so the power issue is often defined away (by assuming that a partnership is based on common goals, equal power and voluntary commitment), ignored or considered not supportive for democratic decision making. Related to this problem is the prevalent idea that a partnership should be voluntary. This premise obscures the power dynamics of partnerships. A grounded theory study argued that (successful) partnerships can be divided into two groups: those where the partnership model was imposed by an initiator from either societal sphere (so called ‘constrained choice’ alliances) and those where the partners were involved in the development and design of the partnership model and the choice of partners (so called ‘voluntary’ alliance) (Baxter, 2012). The “degree of voluntariness” of the partnership therefore, defines also the nature of the interaction and the resulting dependencies, but not necessarily its success. Not including powerful (needed) actors in the partnership creates other problems. There is evidence that the involvement of powerful actors is necessary (but not sufficient) for the success of a partnership (Pattberg et al, 2012). Besides, the power base of organizations can diverge. Civil society organizations can also tap into other sources of power such as the power to frame the debate or to act as a voice for less powerful partners (Gray, 2006: 42). This advocacy role can also negatively affect the partnership if inappropriately timed.

Power inequalities in partnerships are almost unavoidable (Purdy, 2012), extremely difficult to change through partnerships, but, if weakly addressed, can seriously hamper their effectiveness (Visseren-Hamakers et al., 2007: 165; Bryson et al, 2006; Huxham, 2000). Not addressing the

power and interest problem also leads to an increased risk for free-rider problems to appear (Gunningham, 2006). Power imbalances appear in particular in the negotiations between businesses and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), between northern- and southern partners and between donors and local partners. Relatively speaking, NGOs and local communities in developing countries are deprived of huge financial resources or access to sufficient knowledge; as a result they can become too dependent on the partnership and consequently become a reactive partner, which in the end might affect the resilience of the partnership (and its contribution to common problems). Governments can compensate for asymmetry of information and/or empower CSOs and civil society, in order to make partnership negotiations take place on more equal footing (Gunningham, 2006:132). This requires a government that is able to use its position as the provider of public goods in an effective way. Governance highlights in particular the risks involved in partnering, but also suggests possible ways of structuring collaboration for dealing with power inequalities (Buse & Harmer 2004). So, many observers conclude that power and power sharing arrangements go to “the heart of what is contentious about PPPs” (Buse & Harmer, 2004:49). Even the search for complementary resources and organizational compatibility – as a condition for co-creation of value - will probably be based on self-interest (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012).

Change driven or dominated by the interest of one sector (either state-driven, market-driven or civic-driven change) is not likely to create sufficient preconditions for a sustainable resolution of a wicked problem and is therefore prone to a number of serious ‘failures’ related to each sector, which in turn lowers the legitimacy of these sector. When brought together in a partnering initiatives, especially these fundamental institutional differences and interests are a root cause of conflicting goals (Stadtler & Probst, 2012) and mutual distrust (Gombra, 2013). So they can conflict, but they also can converge or complement each other. But how can they actually be combined and made to cooperate? Interest exchange and shared interests are considered a more necessary (but not sufficient) condition for effective partnerships than trust or values. Shared interests create the precondition for trust-building, though, and for shared value creation. So called ‘interest-based negotiation’ (IBN) is therefore one of the most obvious techniques applied for by brokers in the scoping phase and trained in partnership broker courses. It is also used to compensate for some of the weaknesses of the scoping phase (ibid). IBN is adapted from juridical practice and international relations. It aims to find solutions, which satisfy all parties involved in the negotiation of a problem (Katz & Patarini, 2008). As such it can be understood as a technique to help find solutions to aligned problems, and thus addresses

the key basis of a partnership. Besides IBN's utility in conflict situations in a partnering process, it can also help to uncover the driving interests of (potential) partners at the early stages (Warner, 2003). The bigger the institutional void that needs to be addressed, the more important it becomes to take different interests (in creating a solution) into account that can be shaped by various types of partnerships. Section 4 will elaborate the consequential 'fit' challenge for brokers when taking these societal dimensions into account.

3. The specific formation challenge – what constitutes sophisticated scoping?

Scoping is aimed at contributing to setting realistic and common expectations on the current situation, necessary efforts, risks, and probable outcomes (Tennyson, 2012). Though partnership practitioners recognize the importance of scoping, it is noted that they often do not devote sufficient time on it in practice (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Austin, 2000), and the limited attention is often focused on elaborate due diligence analyses – strongly influenced by the importance attached to (perceived) power and interest differences. There is not much research done on the effectiveness of particular scoping exercises for CSPs. Studies on the scoping practice have primarily been performed for environmental projects (Mulvihill, 2003: 40).

We studied the practice of scoping in the context of the above interest and power considerations (Kahlen, 2014) taking three dimensions of scoping into account: scoping the project context, screening as stakeholder identification (combined with complementary capability mapping) and problem analysis (often related to the specification of a Logical Framework (LFA) that should guide monitoring and evaluation efforts). Challenges with the present scoping process as they are managed and trained are (a) difficult assessment whether partnering is actually the best way to go forward, (b) dealing with multiple problem 'owners', (c) screening for an organizational, cultural fit between the potential partners, (d) including a thorough joint problem analysis early in the process, and (e) the transition from a problem analysis to specific partnership objectives that do justice to the complexity of the actual problem, (f) include capacity building and continuous learning possibilities in CSP set-up. Each of these challenges is seriously impacted by the unfathomable characteristics of wicked problems that CSPs often try to resolve. The inclination for a selection bias for simpler problems, for simplifying problems in the partnership formation stage and for coalitions of the willing rather than an optimal fit, is strong but understandable.

Firstly, does a CSP indeed presents the best approach, compared to ‘going-it-alone’ or engaging in other forms of collaboration, e.g. establishing platforms for dialogue. And in case partnering is necessary, between which parties (government, civil society and firms) and in what constellation. In the partnering cycle this question is faced twice: The first time is at the very beginning of the initial, situational analysis and a second time after a thorough and collective problem analysis, to decide if partnering is still the best way forward. Partnering is currently often consciously chosen and promoted by the leaders of top international organizations from all three sectors, because former solo approaches were not sufficiently successful and the prospect of combining all types of resources to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness for commercial as well as social goals are combined with shared risks and long-term commitment (Wang et al., 2010). Even though such reasoning may be implicitly shared, a check and restatement of it gives legitimacy to all of the following partnering activities and are thus crucial to be executed. When comparing different collaborative models, brokers need to make sure that a common understanding exists about the exact terminologies and specifications of the different approaches. During the process it is also important for brokers to be honest and not create their own jobs by suggesting partnerships when not appropriate.

Secondly, dealing with multiple problem ‘owners’ (compared to the Logical Framework practice that relies mostly on one project owner) is easily amplified in cross-sector collaborations due to the enduring skepticism or even outright hostility between the sectors (Gombra, 2013; Tennyson, 2005; UNGC, 2011). Hostilities are based on the positions of actors in the societal triangle and the fulfillment of their roles; in case actors fail in their primary responsibility, respect will also be difficult to establish. Further actors should establish an appreciation of the other parties’ viewpoints, upon which a joint problem analysis and solution generation can be based. IBN is a main tool for brokers for such mediation, but with considerable limitations as analyzed in a separate paper (Van Tulder and Kahlen, 2015; PrC 2016).

Third, when aiming at innovative solutions that bring transformational change to wicked problems, an organizational and cultural fit between the partnering organizations presents a critical factor. Concepts how to assess for such potential match however remain largely theoretical, and their use in practice, customized to each partnership’s unique requirements needs to be understood, tested and advanced by brokers.

Fourth, one of the biggest challenges currently faced in CSP practice is the inclusion of a thorough joint problem analysis. While being an integral part of the Logical Framework Approach, critical problem analysis is usually not emphasized neither in the theoretical nor the practitioners partnering literature. Many partnering tool books or monitoring frameworks do not start with the problem definition and diagnosis of a partnership project, but immediately jump to the intended outcome and design (Van Tulder, 2010). Brokers must ideally not fall prey to such time pressures and resist the temptation to jump to ostensible solutions without conducting a joint-analysis. This challenge, however, points more at a missing general framework for analyzing wicked/complex problems than a lack of time (see section 5).

The fifth challenge for CSPs scoping and a more sophisticated brokering partnering practice is the transition from a common problem understanding to a specific partnership objective. This challenge incorporates several of the other challenges, e.g. issues with the multiple ownership or arriving at a common problem understanding and ultimately a shared vision. Brokers in the present practice find it difficult to encourage partners to incorporate such a vision on a complex problem, in order act in concert.

The final challenge in scoping relates to the current trend towards an emphasis of capacity building in partnering and continuous learning (e.g. Burke & Pearson, 2013; Abrahamson & Becker, 2010; WorldVision, 2013; GIZ, 2012; UNGC, 2013; Glasson, 1999). Abrahamson and Becker's study show how helpful the application of LFA can be for capacity development plans in the case of disaster risk management collaboration (2010). In their works on collaborative value creation Austin and Seitanidi describe the importance for organizations to stay adaptive, and to engage in "deliberate role recalibration" and experimentation on partnering design and substance (2012b: 938). CSP Brokers can therefore seize an opportunity to incorporate dimensions of flexibility and continuous (loop) learning into the partnership design and processes. This should also help to prevent the occurrence of too technical and complicate procedural action plans as the outcome of scoping, as criticized by Snel & Cowell (2006), or of LFA, as criticized by an interviewee.

Many partnerships at the moment seem primarily to be interested in formation. Only when explicitly asked, for instance by donor organizations, monitoring and evaluation procedures are elaborated with some degree of sophistication (Keen and Van Tulder, 2014). Regularly the

memorandum of understanding – result of the scoping phase – specifies that M&E ‘will be developed’ in the first stage of the partnership execution. As a result, many partnerships fall short of a good zero-measurement (IOB evaluations, 2015), while the monitoring process becomes part of a political (re)negotiation process during the implementation of the partnership. This is bound to influence the dynamics of the partnership and ultimately its success (interview). Setting the conditions for proper Monitoring and related governance, thus, can be considered a vital task of the broker in the scoping phase.

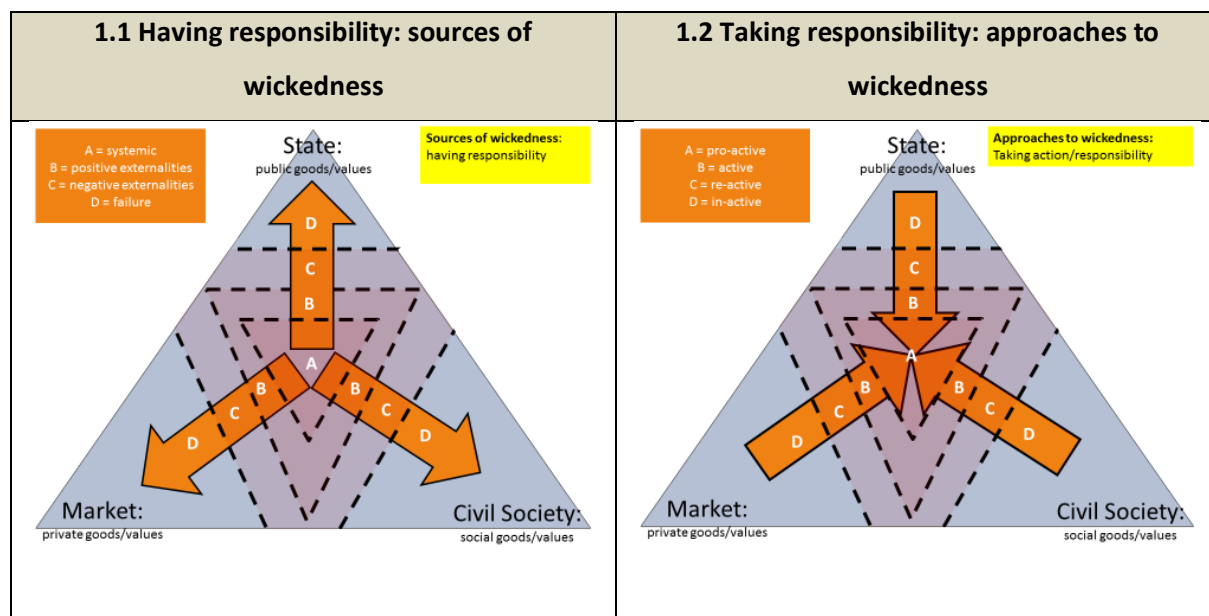
4. Creating organizational fit: specific challenges

Addressing the scoping challenges that CSP brokers face (section 2 and 3) requires a process of ‘societal triangulation’, i.e. the effort to relate the source and nature of wickedness for which the partnership is intended to its sectoral origins (Van Tulder and Keen, 2018). A particularly important problem is created by the finding that most partnerships are formed on the basis of ‘coalitions of the willing’ rather than ‘coalitions of the needed’. It would be more logical to first start with a problem analysis, and then scope and screen the stakeholders, but in practice this process often gets reversed. This explains for the substantial attention given to subjective criteria (Pinto, 2010), indirect techniques to define the problem through the eyes of the voluntary participants (Örtengren, 2004; Tennyson, 2012), very general techniques with special, or the involvement of external stakeholders (Mulvihill, 2003), reinforced by the often limited time available for starting-up the partnership. The proper issue-partnership fit should ideally provide room for a dynamic relationship. Issues change, under the influence of the acts of societal parties, so the necessary partnership configuration could also change. The collaboration literature increasingly emphasizes the importance of adaptive CSPs (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b). The partnering process – and the measurement of its effectiveness – then become primarily performance based rather than impact based (Van Tulder et al, 2016). The resource configuration that the partnership achieves might not lead to the needed (shared or synergetic) value creation (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). In particular synergistic value creation is achievable through a high organizational fit with the issue.

The partnering formation and scoping process can therefore be improved by introducing a societal triangulation technique (Figure 1). In a separate paper we specified this technique further as an input to ‘developmental evaluation’ for transformational partnerships. In this

contribution we focus on the ‘fit’ dimension that is related to the various partnership constellations that can be defined as part of a relatively quick scoping effort that can be undertaken by brokers – either alone or in consultation with participating stakeholders. Sources of wickedness can then be linked to the three sectors that surround issues: governments (state), firms (market), citizens (communities). Each sector adds a different, complementary approach to an issue, partly because the primary responsibility of each – and its value proposition - is different: markets provide private goods on an exclusive for-profit basis, communities provide social goods for communities (that can be partly exclusive for others), governments create public goods (that are provided to all) on a non-profit basis. Well-functioning societies are ‘balanced’ societies in which each of these sectors plays constructive and complementary roles. The better each sector functions, the easier it becomes to address wicked problems. The principle of ‘societal triangulation’ boils down to the question whether sectors have and take responsibilities. Two perspectives need to fit: inside-out in which the societal nature of the problem is explored and outside-in which focuses on the various approaches that organizations can or need to adopt towards the problem.

Figure 1 Sources and Approaches to wicked problems



Taking an ‘inside-out’ perspective (1.1), we can define the degree of ‘wickedness’ of a societal challenge by the degree to which we can expect each sector to take up responsibilities for the problem. This approach builds on insights from welfare and institutional economics, combined

with collective good theory (cf. Van Tulder and Keen, 2018; Van Tulder with van der Zwart, 2006). We present an abbreviated version of this line of reasoning in this chapter.

In case a challenge is beyond the grasp of primary responsibilities and core capabilities of organizations, the more wicked it becomes to organize effective approaches:

- A. **Systemic challenges:** So called ‘common pool’ problems are nobody’s responsibility. They are also called ‘tragedy of the commons’ and should be considered the most ‘wicked’. So-called ‘by-stander effects’ appear in which everybody sees the problem but nobody is able or willing to act. Systemic problems are also called ‘collective action’ problems, because they require the joint action of all societal sectors at the same time.
- B. **Insufficient creation of positive externalities:** problems can be addressed by sectors, but run the risk of being under provided if left to the initiating sector itself (so-called ‘Merit goods’). Examples are education, vaccination, employment effects, sufficient investments for innovative public products and services.
- C. **Lacking responsibilities:** in case a sector creates negative effects for society; they create costs for society. Examples of these so-called ‘negative externalities’ are: pollution, citizens that do not clean up their waste (and create health issues), corrupt or inadequate governments. The sector can solve this issue themselves, but very often is not able or willing to do this. [score 20-30]
- D. **Sectoral failure:** market failure exists in case firms do not supply goods that people want; governance failure exists in case governments do not create the laws and sufficient regulation; civic failure exists in case communities do not organize sufficient mutual support and trust.

Taking an outside-in perspective, we can consider the type of approach, roles and responsibilities societal actors are considered to take in facing up to the challenge (Figure 1.2). The partnership configuration defines the extent to which the partnership and the issue ‘fit’. The most logical partnering approach towards ‘failure’ is thereby ‘intra-sectoral’. Addressing failure ideally belongs to the ‘fiduciary duty’ of a societal sector (ibid). Problems of failure become particularly ‘wicked’ when parties involved do not address them adequately. They become wicked for the other parties in society. The wickedness of these problems is primarily related to the inability or unwillingness of the primary sectors involved to coordinate their activities with others in the same sectors and restore ‘trust’ in the public perception of this sector. The wickedness of the problem is *largely intra-sectoral*. In case of the existence of

negative externalities we can expect combinations of intra-sectoral as well as bi-sectoral partnerships – primarily triggered by reputational effects.

The creation of positive externalities and collective challenges, however, require a different type of partnering. The more active the required approach for societal sectors becomes, the bigger the institutional void they have to address, the more cross-sectoral partnership become a requirement for effectively addressing the issue. So in order to create positive externalities we can expect bilateral or even trilateral partnership to fit the issue. A particularly wicked dimension appears when actors voluntarily take over the primary responsibilities of other actors. We call this ‘crowding out’. For instance when citizens or governments clean up the waste produced by companies, they provide a perverse incentive for them not to take up their own responsibility (related to their fiduciary duty). The final layer of societal wickedness [D] is the most difficult to address. It represents that part of the societal set-up that requires the participation of all actors in society, which however do not feel responsibility and primarily see the risk of getting involved. This is the case for almost all climate issues, including the plastic soup in the middle of the ocean where no government rules. It is also the case for most economic growth topics where common and collective action beyond individual responsibilities are needed to put a minimum level of social, economic and ecological regulation. These challenges are as ‘super-wicked’ (Van Tulder & Keen, 2018) because they require innovative governance and trilateral partnering arrangements.

Table 1 Issue-Partnering Fit

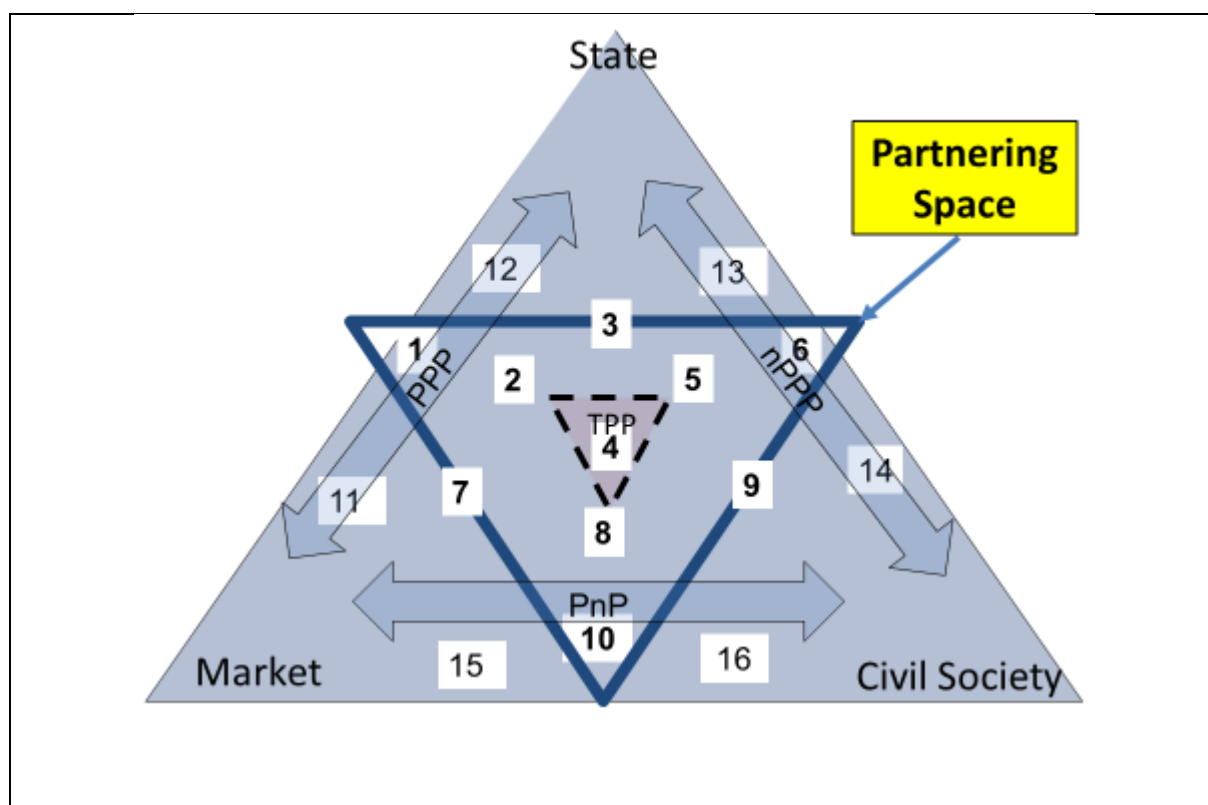
Needed ? (degree of wickedness)	[D] Address failure []	[C] Deal with negative externalities []	[B] Create positive externalities []	[A] Engage in collective action []
Having responsibility	High []	Low []	Low []	Low []
Taking responsibility for addressing a problem?				
Description: Whether organizations...	..take up their primary role:	.. deal with negative externalities	.. try to create positive externalities	.. engage in collective action to solve systemic problem

State:	laws and regulation (mandating) poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Facilitating: subsidies and regulation against public “bads” poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Endorsing and facilitating other organisations to create positive effects poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Trilateral partnering to change the system poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]
Market:	Competitive production of goods and services poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Minimize negative effects (e.g. pollution) poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Optimize positive effects: in products and value chains poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Fix system together with whole sector and communities, innovation poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]
Communities/ Civil Society:	Creating social value through Mutual support poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Advocacy within and towards other sectors poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	Service delivery to create positive effects: poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	trilateral partnering to create systems change poor good []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]
Matching need?	No yes []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	No yes []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	No yes []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]	No yes []-[]--[]--[]-[]-[]
Partnership approach:	Intra-organizational /sectoral	Intra/bi-sectoral partnerships	Bi/tri-partite partnerships	Tri-partite partnerships

Each sector can take up four different roles (Van Tulder & Pfisterer, 2016) to varying degrees. They run more or less parallel to the origins of wicked problems: the degree to which organizations take up their primary roles (fiduciary duty), deal with negative externalities (such as pollution or corruption), try to create positive externalities or spill-overs and engage in collective action to solve systemic problems. The four basic roles of governments are thereby mandating (laws), facilitating (subsidies), endorsing and partnering (collective action). The four basic roles of companies are competing (through prices), dealing with negative or positive externalities and taking up collective responsibilities. While the four basic roles civil society organizations can take are mutual support, advocacy, service delivery and partnering.

So a more refined scoping exercise defines the envisaged partnership configurations (coalition of the needed) in terms of the fit between an inside-out (problem definition) and an outside-in (partnership configuration) approach. The latter is the degree to which each societal sector and their representative is able and willing to take up consecutive roles (A, B, C, D). The broker can consequently define a number of gaps in the partnering approach along the interface between public and private sectors of the partnership (Seitanidi, Crane, 2014). This defines the potential for partnering between the various sectors – the partnering space of society (Van Tulder & Pfisterer, 2014). Three types of bilateral partnerships exist [public - private partnership (PPP), private - non-profit (PnPP) and non-profit - public (nPPP)] and one type of tripartite partnership (TPPs) between actors from all three spheres (Figure 2). By adopting particular roles, organization acknowledge their partial responsibility for the issue and a bigger or smaller willingness to act in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Figure 2 Partnering space and organizational fit



Using this scoping technique, we can identify ten possible positions of partnerships within the core triangle of the partnering space – as defined by the interface between public-private-profit-non-profit - and six additional combinations more in the periphery outside of the core partnering space. In practice all these combinations can and are probably dubbed as ‘cross-sector

partnerships’, but from the previous discussion it can be derived that their logic, their dynamics and their contribution to sustainable development will be substantially different. As our framework identifies a set of different partnering types in the partnering space, we are also able to come up with propositions on the possibility of partners to reach a specific stage of the ‘collaborative continuum’ as introduced by Austin and Seitanidi (2012): philanthropic, transactional, transitional and transformational. By doing so, this taxonomy emphasises the fit between partners based on the role(s) they can adopt in partnerships based on their societal position. The degree of fit defines the conditions of success of partnerships for sustainable development. The better the fit, the more appropriate roles and dependencies are aligned; or the smaller the fit, the bigger the change of misalignment and role conflicts.

The 16 different cross-sections represent different institutional voids and potential partnering-issue fits as well as sources of ‘risk’ for the partnership to fail (see section 2). Each of the identified voids differs from one another by the level of commitment from the players from each sector. In the first ten positions, each organization feels at least interdependent on the other actors and at least one of them is committed to engage in a partnership. These positions lay within the inner triangle, the actual ‘partnering space’. The other positions (11-16) lay outside the partnering space, as they represent bilateral relations in which only one of the partners is supportive of a partnering approach that aims at addressing negative externalities. Such constellation makes it increasingly difficult to establish functioning partnerships and therefore could be dubbed as a ‘partial bilateral fit’. The risk of limited loyalty of a particular partner to the partnership (in whatever constellation) looms large and is strongly related to reputational effects.

Based on the similar constellations of commitment, which determine the organizational fit, the first ten identified voids can also be further sorted into four categories. The core position [#.4] resembles a “full trilateral fit” and is the only one position in which all relevant societal actors are likely to combine wholehearted their partnership strategies. A “partial trilateral fit” is represented by positions 2, 5 and 8, in which two parties embrace the partnership strategy, while one considers itself more dependent of the other actors considering the problem addressed by the partnership. In a “weak trilateral fit” (positions 3, 7 and 9), only one party recognizes interdependence on the problem, whereas two other parties find the issue quite distant and will not be inclined to take action or responsibilities. In positions 1, 6 and 10, one of the three spheres does not consider itself responsible or involved in the issue, while the other two actors can

engage in an equally committed partnership, which is called an optimal bilateral fit. With a better understanding of the different institutional voids to be bridged by CSPs, one can proceed with an analysis of the different challenges per void, and how brokers can contribute to a better development of effective partnerships.

5. Conclusion: the challenge ahead for brokers

This paper is largely theoretical and conceptual. But it started with a discussion of the practical challenge that CSP brokers face in the formation phase of partnering. We observed that in particular scoping techniques are executed with the prime input of those parties that voluntarily are participating. This technique has major shortcoming. The main argument used by brokers, however, is that there is no time or willingness to come to more sophisticated scoping approach – which consequently jeopardizes in particular the convener role of CSP brokers. Ultimately, by not being able (or willing) to identify which partners are needed for the successful approach to a societal challenge, this also affects another important function of CSP brokers as learning facilitator and even as mediator. We introduced a societal triangulation technique that should help CSP brokers perform more effective scoping at the start of a partnership. Confronting the degree of wickedness of a problem with the degree of commitment by participating organizations, should help brokers define the formation gap they have to fill in the scoping phase. Different degrees of commitment create an unbalanced partnership and a source for potential difficulties in the formation – and certainly in the continuation - of a partnership. One improvement in an unbalanced CSP would be a change of commitment by one or more partners. This could be an important role that a broker performs. The broker can try to convince a potential actor to recognize the interdependent and wicked nature of the problem and the need to participate in a more active way in its solution (in terms of table 2 move from a 'poor' to a 'good' fulfilment of a particular role). Table 2 considers the five 'fit' challenges as identified in section 4. We formulate a number of challenges, tasks and roles that were suggested in the literature (in particular Stadler & Probst (2012) and Van Tulder & Pfisterer (2014)). The overall challenge for the broker in each of these five categories is summarized as a leading motto.

Category of Challenge	Full trilateral fit (#4)	Partial trilateral fit (#2, #5, #8)	Weak trilateral fit (#3, #7, #9)	Optimal bilateral fit (#1, #6, #10)	Partial bilateral fit (#11 - #16)
Motto for the broker	Balance and clearly separate roles and responsibilities according to capabilities	Ensure everybody's acknowledgement of own failure and therefore also own need for action /commitment, not just reliance on other players.	Ensure a full understanding of the difficult set-up and enable a commitment of all parties.	Regular brokering according to Stadtler & Probst (2012).	Critically question if this is really the solution wanted? Probe for other alternatives.
Attitudinal challenges	- Only minor challenge: "All the parties acknowledge that their failure to address a specific issue is part of the problem" (p.18). → Ensure full & balanced commitment of each partner.	- Acknowledge the differing degrees of commitment. - For CSOs assuming the role of service provider (#2): Risk of over commitment and crowding out.	- Too little commitment (acknowledgement of failure in own sphere and responsibility in its solution).	- No additional challenges as these "represent the ideal-typical PPP (#1), nPPP (#6) and PnP (#10)" (p.19, van Tulder & Pfisterer, 2013) → Ensure maintained momentum	- High motivational challenge, as only it is "analytically unjust to characterize this project as a partnership" (p.20, ibid, 2013) → Ensure real commitment e.g. of State (#12, #13).
Formal challenges	- "None of the parties can mix up intentions and roles" (p.18).	- Greatest risk for free-riding or abandoning the partnership	- "In order to be effective – require substantially strict governance measures in order	- Ensure governance is set-up to reach full potential of partnership	- Ensure formalization of roles (Committed partner might

	- “Requires important institutional and legal facilitative frameworks.” (p.18, ibid, 2013).	→ Risk of loss (or decrease) of resource or capability, which is essential for the functioning of the partnership.	to handle the sizable free-riding possibilities of this partnership” (p.19, ibid, 2013).		complain about lack of commitment from partner).
Tasks for brokers	→ Ensure equal and equally understood commitment. → Clear roles & responsibilities according to organizational capabilities (& resources). Have these integrated into a clear governance framework. → Identify specific organizational capabilities necessary and detect potentials for synergies.	→ Identify and name unequal commitment, and indicate possible consequences → Suggest frameworks (such as agreements, contracts) to mitigate and protect against loss of resources. <u>Endorsing (#8):</u> - Lack of public support → publicity - Less financial, or other resources made available. → Risk of changing political agendas	- Assess realistic impact of partnership, when only one organization fully commits to the partnership. → Is the cost-benefit calculation still intact? #9:Ensure sufficient (long-term) financial and other necessary resource support from state and market (CSO will otherwise stay small and is not scalable).	Roles & Tasks as described by Stadler & Probst: (2012) - Matchmaking between two committed parties - Facilitation to reach inter-organizational synergies → (Analysis of capabilities, according division of roles & responsibilities, well governed enforcement) - Support (knowledge creation and management)	- Assess realistic impact of partnership. (Are there synergetic organizational capabilities to bridge gap?) - Expectation Management! → Low chances for high impact! - Ensure commitment of other parties (just subsidizing (#13) or use for reputation (#15)).

Leading roles	<u>Outsourcing (#5):</u> - Less provision of financial support - Provision of firm capability not likely in the first place.			→ Develop institutionalization of CSO as their internal basis of power. → Assess organizational capability of CSO to provide private and public goods.	- De-escalate
	Convener		Convener		Convener
	Mediator		Mediator		
	Learning catalyst				

Table 1 - Brokering challenges for creating the right fit

There exist general challenges and tasks for brokers, relevant for all types of fits and roles as discussed in section two. The first one is the correct identification of each party's organizational capabilities and resources, as well as the detection of potential synergies according to these capabilities. But even with a high organizational fit between the potential partners, their honest commitment to the partnering approach (which itself needs to be explained and separated for example from mere sponsoring activities) needs to be assessed thoroughly. Potential partners have a big incentive to present themselves motivated, in order to engage in partial or weak trilateral or partial bilateral CSPs with free-riding opportunities for them. Therefore, investigating the underlying interests needs to prove their motivation. To do so the techniques from interest-based negotiation strategies can help, which are discussed in chapter seven. A final indication of the true engagement of an organization in a partnership is the amount and degree of responsibilities a partner is willing to take. For this reason, and to ensure a functioning implementation of the identified organizational fit and the arising synergies, a third key task for the broker is to ensure such commitment in written agreements on the partnership governance (Tennyson, 2005). But the written specification of this commitment – certainly in the case of wicked problems – should be more aimed learning and a collective vision development than to detailed control measures and key performance indicators (Van Tulder & Keen, 2018).

By classifying the various partnering fit in terms of full-partial or weak-optimal, the broker should be better able to identify the challenges for a sophisticated scoping exercise. In a full-trilateral partnership, the task for a broker lie in the balancing and coordination of the - in principal - equal commitment of each party. In an optimal bilateral fit partnership between a company and a governmental agency for instance, CSOs are not actively involved as they are not affected by the issue (van Tulder & Pfisterer, 2013). This impartiality may actually point to the best theoretical fit for an independent broker, a 'liaison' according to Gould & Fernandez (1989). In partial and weak fits of the potential partnerships, one can expect considerably more tasks for the broker. First and foremost, brokers must assess if an implementation of the partnerships and the generation of a significant impact on the issue is realistic. When such a first test is successfully passed, the broker still needs to identify and raise the topic of unequal commitments to the potential partners, including a discussion of the possible consequences for and during the partnership. Related to this, the broker's task of expectation management is amplified in unbalanced partnerships, while it is already one of the greatest challenges for brokers in general (Gombra, 2013). This expectation management should also include risks, such as a change of the political agenda that can change the commitment of state agencies in

partnerships, for example in elections. For such cases, brokers can suggest partnership frameworks with flexible governance configurations, in order to stabilize the equilibriums that were created under inequality. Even in flexible governance configurations, however, a clear assignment of roles and responsibilities (for each one of the possible configurations) remains commendable.

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