CHAPTER 17

Conclusions: The Dynamic and Fluid World of Partnerships

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17.1   Introduction

The introductory chapter outlined the context of the central question of this book: how do partnerships between public and private actors contribute to the livability of cities? The conclusions in this chapter summarize the main patterns that we have distilled from the various chapters of the book. We start with a number of observations about the variation in partnerships. Second, the role of context and the characteristics of partnerships with respect to livability are analyzed. Third, we focus on the question of who benefits in terms of livability and who is excluded. Fourth, we discuss the different roles that the government may play in

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developing and sustaining partnerships that contribute to livability. And, fifth, we draw several general conclusions and return to the central question of this book.

17.2   PARTNERSHIPS

In the introductory chapter, we developed a broad understanding of the concept of partnerships, taking the relationship between state, market, and civil society as a starting point for exploring different types of formal and informal partnerships between public and private actors. The types presented in the chapters of this book range from formal partnerships between government and companies (see the chapter by Pill, Chap. 12) to informal partnerships between city government and civil society associations (see Van de Wetering and Kaulingfreks, Chap. 13), partnerships as 'liminal spaces' in between system and society (see Oldenhof et al., Chap. 15), partnerships as 'multidisciplinary teaming' (Groenleer et al., Chap. 11) and partnerships that started as bottom-up initiatives by citizens (see de Abreu et al., Chap. 3 or Berti Suman, Chap. 10).

A first observation relating to the variation in partnerships is that is not always easy to define what is public and what is private in a public-private partnership. For example, Lu, Sun and de Jong (Chap. 5) point out that, because the government in China retains a controlling interest in state-owned enterprises, private enterprises of the type found in Western countries do not exist in China. Hence, it may be more appropriate to refer to public semi-public partnerships in the context of China. A more general observation is that the concept of partnerships may differ in post-industrial western countries from authoritarian states. As van der Heijden and Hong (Chap. 2) argue: 'the development strategy that drives state-guided economies such as South Korea, but also Japan and Singapore, has an inherently different understanding of the relationship between government, civil society and the business sector from that in, for example, liberal capitalist economies.' Where their analysis of cases in Seoul shows a far-reaching partnership between citizens and the state with a strong commitment from the Seoul government, from a Western point of view, this hardly constitutes a partnership but at best a form of 'tokenist' citizen participation (Arnstein 1969).

A second observation regarding the variation in type of partnership is that partnerships as such are not static but dynamic; they are fluid and often continue to develop and shapeshift over time. Numerous chapters

provide examples of bottom-up initiatives that were taken forward in a later phase by other parties such as professional organizations, civil society organizations, and municipal governments. Examples are the case descriptions of neighborhood initiatives in Paris (Van de Wetering and Kaulingfreks, Chap. 13), the green initiatives in Tilburg (van Montfort and Michels, Chap. 4), and the citizen sensing initiatives in Fukushima and Eindhoven (Berti Suman, Chap. 10). The fluid nature of partnerships and their capacity to morph from one type into another is also shown in the cases of Seoul (van der Heijden and Hong, Chap. 2) and in the examples of urban labs (Oldenhof et al., Chap. 15). Partnerships seem to adapt their form according to what is needed given the tasks they are performing and the challenges they are facing.

A final observation is that sometimes, partnerships begin in one particular area but then show scaling-up effects to other areas as well. Interesting examples are provided by de Abreu et al. (Chap. 3) who demonstrate how micro-scale forms of urban agriculture started off as small projects focusing on food production, but gained a much broader spin-off in education, health provision, and in environmental and food practices.

17.3   LIVABILITY

In the introductory chapter, we assumed that there were two sets of factors that influence how partnerships contribute to livability: on the one hand, the characteristics and the management of the partnership and on the other, the role of context.

As regards the characteristics and the management of partnerships, we see that a strong commitment to the partnership and its goal is essential for a partnership to be effective. This commitment can be based on a common interest or on the self-interest of the partners in a partnership. When different parties collaborate, as is common in type H of our typology, it is important that, participant diversity notwithstanding, all participants be committed to a shared goal, as Berti Suman (Chap. 10) and Groenleer et al. (Chap. 11) point out in their contributions. Also, an early open attitude towards each other stimulates engagement and mutual trust (Berti Suman, Chap. 10). This should always be accompanied by good governance. As Mwangi (Chap. 6) shows in her chapter, corruption is a major threat to the effective functioning of any partnership and its contribution to livability.

Another aspect that is mentioned is the role of stable funding and stable (political) leadership. For example, as Lima demonstrates in her chapter (Chap. 7), if the funding provided for new social housing is inadequate, other partners, such as the not-for-profit housing providers, will not be capable of contributing to affordable housing supply. Another observation is that a change of political leadership (e.g. the appointment of a new mayor) might also imply a change in the regulations and (informal) agreements between the partners in the partnership (see e.g. van der Heijden and Hong, Chap. 2).

At the same time, partnerships must remain responsive to the (changing) needs and wishes of the public and private partners. This requires a constant balancing act between on the one hand strong commitment, shared goals, stable leadership and funding and, on the other hand, a constant willingness to be responsive to the outside world and a capability to adapt agreements according to changing needs and challenges. Many examples in this book show the capability of partnerships to adapt to changing circumstances and to develop over time.

In order to understand the relationship between partnerships and livability, the role of context must also be taken into account. Context, first of all, defines the type and urgency of livability problems that cities are facing. For example, an immediate crisis, such as the 2011 earthquake and subsequent 15-metre tsunami which destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant caused public discontent. People were upset about the lack of—and often contradictory—information on the actual radiation levels and livability in the region, and this gave rise to a sense of urgency among citizens to do something about this (Berti Suman, Chap. 10). Another context factor concerns the political constellation. For example, the mayor of Seoul played a significant role in promoting the energy conservation efforts of Seoul residents (van der Heijden and Hong, Chap. 2). And in Tilburg and Melbourne, too, the political climate played a major role. In Melbourne, the neo-liberal governance regime at the beginning of the century thwarted efforts to green the city, while in Tilburg, the coalition of mostly center and left-wing parties that took office in 2014 made the implementation of a green policy one of its top priorities (van Montfort and Michels, Chap. 4). Other relevant context factors are population growth or decline, economic decline, and climate change. In San José, explosive population growth resulted in a city that expanded outward in a non-structured way (urban sprawl). This forced the city to reconsider its urban planning and to focus on improving the quality of the existing space

(van Montfort and Michels, Chap. 4). In Nairobi, the growth of the economy and the population, in particular, the middle-income groups, put pressure on creating affordable housing for many people (Mwangi, Chap. 6). And in Baltimore, it was population decline and the governance imperative to increase the City of Baltimore's population and thus alleviate its 'fiscal squeeze' that pushed the issue of the livability of this 'shrinking city' to the fore. Baltimore's city government has a long history of seeking partnerships with private (corporate and non-profit) actors to develop and deliver a policy agenda to stabilize and grow the city (Pill, Chap. 12). Also, the need to adapt the city to changing (climate) conditions can create a sense of urgency, for example in response to severe bouts of draught in Melbourne or extreme rainfall in Tilburg (van Montfort and Michels, Chap. 4).

In addition to this, context also sets the social and institutional framework within which partnerships operate and livability problems are faced. For example, strongly increased housing prices and a general decline of affordable housing are now common phenomena in many countries of the world. However, the hukou-system, the system of household registration in China which is used to control access to social services, is typical for China and contributes to a lack of access by migrant workers (people who migrate from rural areas to urban areas for work) to affordable housing in the larger cities (Liu and Chew, Chap. 8). Also, as previously noted, in authoritarian and state-controlled economies the far-reaching participation of citizens and the private sector is considered to be inconsistent with their institutional and governance structure.

17.4   Livable for Whom

In the introduction, we argued that the question is not so much whether a city is livable, but rather for whom it is livable. While the degree of livability of the city may increase for some, others may be mainly confronted with negative effects. We also suggested that there may be a trade-off between green, safe, and affordable housing; a greener and safe city could lead to higher housing prices and thus to less affordable housing for lower-income groups.

Some of the chapters in this book present examples of uneven developments in livability in cities, forms of exclusion, and other negative impacts which partnerships can have on livability. In Baltimore, for example, the policy to increase livability through partnerships with private parties by

predominantly attracting a young and rich population, reinforced the existing power differences between rich white neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods with predominantly African American residents (Pill, Chap. 12). In Berlin, too, inner-city migration led both to a flow of inhabitants from improved neighborhoods to more deprived areas, possibly due to gentrification, but also the other way around (Karsten, Colombo and Schaap, Chap. 14). The authors suggest that the policy of collaborating in the form of partnerships to improve and increase the livability of particular neighborhoods may have played a role in this, but that we should not rule out the possibility that the reported economic and social improvements in formerly deprived neighborhoods are due to inner-city dynamics and citizens' displacement.

Exclusion and other negative consequences of partnerships in relation to livability are prominent in the cases presented on urban living labs. Urban living labs develop multi-stakeholder partnerships to address complex urban issues. However, Nesti describes how in the case of Turin, these partnerships were dominated by the local authorities and the private sector, instead of highly engaged citizens; they were passive users and not full-fledged co-producers of innovation (Nesti, Chap. 16). Likewise, although the urban living labs in Rotterdam tried to include lay citizens, they were unsuccessful in attaining inclusive participation. In practice, 'urban living labs were primarily initiated by highly educated professionals that often had a background in urban design and architecture' (Oldenhof et al., Chap. 15). As a result of this, urban living labs did not emerge outside the central areas of Rotterdam and values upheld by the more left-wing liberal residents, such as sustainability, circular economy, and healthy lifestyles, dominated the interventions of the urban living labs.

Partnerships between citizens and the government might also lead to polarization and conflicts among the residents who, while not part of the partnership, must deal with its impact. For example, many cities now have community safety initiatives. Van Eijk shows that these community safety initiatives in cities in the Netherlands and Belgium sometimes lead to increasing tensions between residents and members of the neighborhood watch teams (van Eijk, Chap. 9).

Partnerships in a corrupt society benefit only a few people, as Mwangi demonstrates in the case of Nairobi (Mwangi, Chap. 6). There, the informal collaboration between urban planners and private developers led to non-compliance with laws and building regulations and, as a consequence,

poor quality dwellings were built, leading to collapsing buildings, and the loss of lives.

Despite these—at times—negative aspects of the contributions of partnerships to livability, there are also examples of partnerships that achieve more than was expected. De Abreu et al. show how initiatives for urban agriculture can sometimes start as very small local initiatives, but subsequently turn into larger public initiatives that even scale up to larger initiatives in agriculture, as well as in other areas such as the environment and health care (de Abreu et al., Chap. 3).

17.5   THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Many chapters show that governments play a strong, albeit not always the same, role in developing and sustaining partnerships. These different roles can be characterized as: (1) facilitating, (2) regulatory, (3) financial, and (4) investing. Sometimes the different roles are combined, depending on the phase of the project.

17.5.1   *Facilitating*

An example of a facilitating role for government is shown in the chapter on the Turin Urban Living Lab, in which Nesti (Chap. 16) illustrates how the municipality of Turin is both the promotor and the facilitator of the Turin Living Lab: it develops the ideas for the experimentation, defines the aims and contents of the partnerships and signs the agreements with the partners. Other examples are the green projects in Tilburg, Melbourne, and San José (van Montfort and Michels, Chap. 4). In all projects, the municipal government had an important role in initiating and supporting the policy towards the greening of the city. However, the way municipal governments interact with citizens, the community, and business organizations differs across the cases, leading to differences in the available opportunities for these parties to initiate, develop, and implement plans for more green in the city.

17.5.2   *Regulatory*

Governments may also take up a more formal, regulatory role. Clear examples can be found in China where public-semi-public partnerships prevail in the eco-city projects because of the dominant role of

state-owned enterprises (Lu, Sun and de Jong, Chap. 5). As the government retains a controlling share in the state-owned enterprises, this form of partnership will probably be dominant for a long time. Also, current policies and practices of public-private partnerships with respect to affordable housing in Chinese cities show a dominant regulatory role for the government (Liu and Chew, Chap. 8).

Another example comes from the experiences with regenerating disadvantaged urban neighborhoods in Berlin. Karsten, Colombo and Schaap (Chap. 14) show that the German federal government developed the 'Socially integrative city' program, aimed at counteracting the growing socio-spatial polarization and fostering integrated stabilization and development in areas with special social integration needs. The state of Berlin became one of the most active partners. Under the supervision of the state, private companies collaborate with neighborhood residents and civil society organizations in developing and implementing public policies.

17.5.3   Financial

Governments also play a financial role by funding projects. The chapter by Lima (Chap. 7) about affordable housing in Dublin suggests that it is almost impossible for not-for-profit housing providers to continue adding to the affordable housing supply at the required scale, unless the government commits itself to providing an adequate level of public finance for new social housing. She concludes that 'the prospect of improving the finance of affordable housing and having a more enabling role in land and incentives still lays lies with the government'. Also, green projects in Tilburg (the Netherlands), Melbourne, and San José (USA) (van Montfort and Michels, Chap. 4) and urban agriculture projects in Orizânia (Brazil) and Montreal (de Abreu et al., Chap. 3) could never have existed without government funding.

17.5.4   Investing

Finally, governments can also engage in the development of projects. An example is the case of Baltimore as presented by Pill in her chapter (Chap. 12). In Baltimore, city government collaborated with private (corporate and non-profit) actors in developing and implementing a policy of neighborhood revitalization. Another example is the city of Melbourne, which

is still responsible for most of the projects which help sustain its transformation into an even greener city (van Montfort and Michels, Chap. 4).

17.6 CONCLUSIONS

17.6.1   *Form Follows Function*

A number of contributions in this book show that partnerships develop over time: sometimes becoming deeper but essentially remaining the same type of partnership and sometimes by transforming from one type into another (see the typologies in Chap. 1). In order to be resilient, partnerships need to adapt and be responsive to changing circumstances and needs. It is important for form to follow function in this transformation process. Both the inability to change as well as an autonomous transformation (for instance, into a more formal partnership) can lead to a decreasing legitimacy of the partnership. Participants in a partnership should therefore continuously ask themselves: does the way we are organized or financed contribute to our goal or should the form and organization of the partnership be changed. From a governance perspective, this changing nature of partnerships is challenging. If, for example, a partnership evolves from an informal to a formal or from an open to a closed partnership, the governance structure that defines who is responsible and accountable for what must also evolve.

17.6.2   *Government Matters*

Government matters. In the first place, because a partnership always operates within a political context. Sometimes governments and partnerships can complement each other, for example, if the activities of the partnerships fit into local policy agendas. But, just as often, the relationship is stressful (see, for instance, the chapters in this book about citizen sensing and urban living labs). Local governments are influential actors that cannot be ignored, which means that a partnership must relate in some way or another to the world of politics.

In the second place, government matters because it often plays a role in enabling the partnership or making a partnership work. In most of the case studies in this book, the government plays an active role in creating or facilitating partnership. This does not automatically mean that this role should always be an interventionist one. On the contrary, enabling a

partnership sometimes requires that the state does not intervene and has the courage to just let things happen. Government does matter, but can do so only with the help of a broad repertoire of (non-)interventionist measures.

17.6.3   Success as a Contingent Variable

The case studies in this book show that many, often interrelated, variables play a role in making a partnership successful or not. This multiplicity of interdependent determining variables does not make it easy to answer the central question in this book: *how do partnerships between public and private actors contribute to the livability of cities*? However, taking an overall perspective on the different chapters offers a means to do so. It then becomes clear that partnerships can contribute to the livability of cities if (1) goal, (2) type of partnership, (3) internal factors and (4) external factors fit together (see Fig. 17.1).

This multiplicity of determining variables makes it difficult to predict what will work, for whom and under what conditions (see the new rules of realistic evaluation, Pawson and Tilley 1997). But it can be helpful to re-arrange the above mentioned determining variables into four building blocks. Together they form a design (ex ante) or evaluation (ex post or ex durante) framework of partnerships.

This 'toolbox', shown in Fig. 17.1, can help practitioners and academics to systematically pose the relevant design- or evaluation questions. Re-arranging the multiplicity of determining variables into four building blocks can help to stimulate what we call *realistic learning*. In realistic learning, good practices are not copied as a whole; instead, only those elements that will work in the specific context are adopted. Every partnership requires a specific set of optimal conditions to make it work. Hence, readers can learn from the case studies described in this book, without copying the practices in full. The Figure above shows four building blocks to design or evaluate partnerships. These building blocks are:

1. *Goal of the partnership*

It all starts with the goal of the partnership: are the goals of the partnership clear for all the participants and is there a shared vision (see also Kenis and Provan 2009, p. 451)? Such goals may include, for example, putting a livability issue on the political agenda (such as 'the lack of affordable
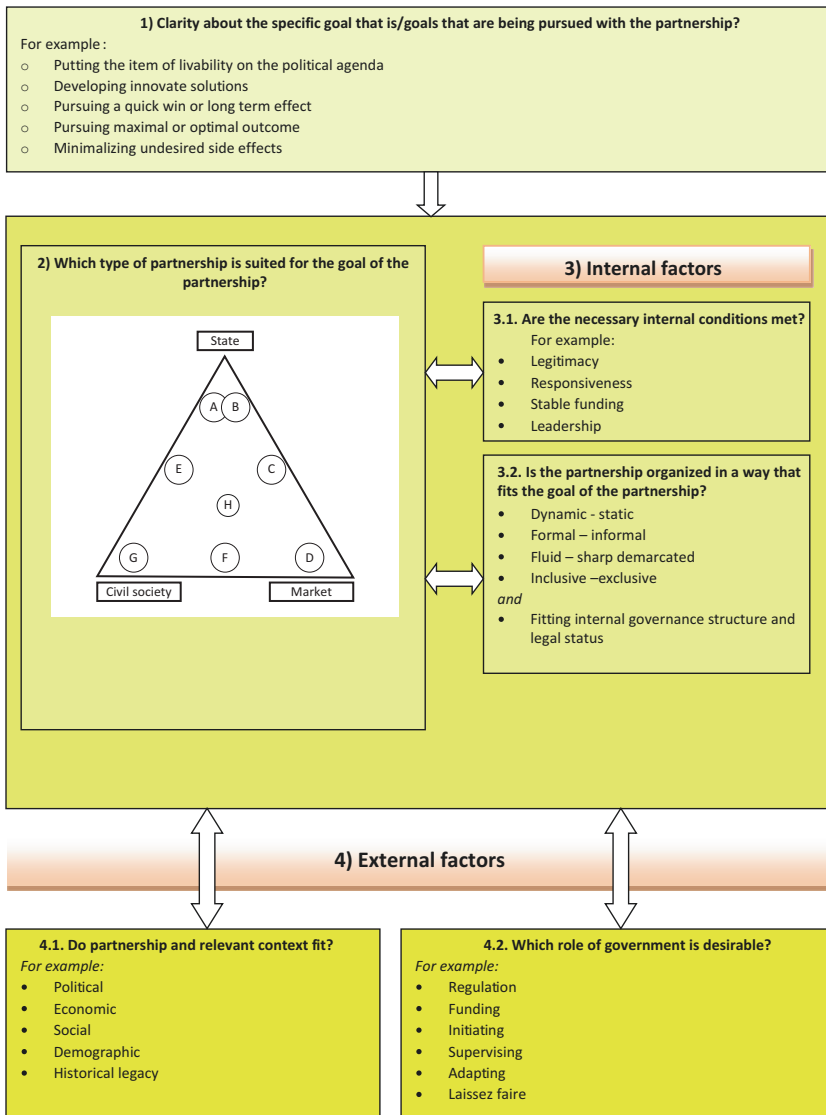
1) Clarity about the specific goal that is/goals that are being pursued with the partnership?

For example :

o   Putting the item of livability on the political agenda
o   Developing innovate solutions
o   Pursuing a quick win or long term effect
o   Pursuing maximal or optimal outcome
o   Minimalizing undesired side effects

2) Which type of partnership is suited for the goal of the partnership?

State

A B

E

C

H

G   F   D

Civil society   Market

3) Internal factors

3.1. Are the necessary internal conditions met?
            For example:
•   Legitimacy
•   Responsiveness
•   Stable funding
•   Leadership

3.2. Is the partnership organized in a way that fits the goal of the partnership?
•   Dynamic - static
•   Formal – informal
•   Fluid – sharp demarcated
•   Inclusive –exclusive
and
•   Fitting internal governance structure and legal status

4) External factors

4.1. Do partnership and relevant context fit?
For example:
•   Political
•   Economic
•   Social
•   Demographic
•   Historical legacy

4.2. Which role of government is desirable?
For example:
•   Regulation
•   Funding
•   Initiating
•   Supervising
•   Adapting
•   Laissez faire

Fig. 17.1   Building blocks for successful partnerships

housing in the city'), creating innovative solutions (such as 'developing technological solutions to improve neighborhood safety') or pursuing short term effects (such as quick wins by expanding the amount of greenery in the city). Depending on the goal, some types of partnerships, specific cultural and organizational characteristics of these partnerships, contexts and roles of government may offer a better -or worse- fit.

If the goals or vision behind the project are not clear or if the participants pursue different goals, the risk of a suboptimal outcome for one or more partners increases. Clarity about the purpose of the partnership and the vision behind it is also important for step 2: who are the relevant partners with whom to pursue this goal, or in other words: who should be in the partnership?

2. *Type of partnership*

In Chap. 1, we introduced eight types of partnerships (A—H) occurring within the triangle formed by the state, civil society and private parties. To be successful, the type of partnership should fit the goals of the partnership. Complex challenges, such as the development of technical tools to improve the safety in specific urban areas, often require active collaboration between the state, citizens and local business, while for other goals—like putting a livability issue on the political agenda—fewer actors are needed in a partnership.

Sometimes a partnership will be shaped as a *layered partnership* (see also Chap. 12). An example of such a partnership would be if one specific group of public and private partners worked together for the funding of the project while other parties were involved in the project's financial exploitation and day-to-day management. The Millennium Park in Chicago is an example of such a layered partnership (Millennium Park 2009).

3. *Internal conditions*

The third design or evaluation question is: 'are the necessary internal conditions met and does the organizational structure fit the goal of the project?'. A number of important requirements for successful partnerships, including legitimacy, responsiveness, stable funding and leadership, were identified in Chap. 1 and briefly reviewed in the above, in Sect. 17.3. In addition to these internal requirements, a partnership should be

organized such that it fits the goal of the partnership. For example, the approach to wicked problems will require a more open and adaptive form of collaboration than the approach to a clear and well-defined problem. Moreover, as shown in the previous chapters, successful partnerships may also be dynamic, fluid (not exclusive) and can take on a different form over time, rather than remaining static and fixed.

Next to these organizational characteristics, two more elements—not extensively discussed in the chapters in this book—are important, namely legal status and the governance structure. Every form of partnership has a legal status. This may vary from 'informal' covenants or declarations of content to a 'formal' foundation or (private) limited company. This legal status should fit the goal and the above mentioned organizational characteristics. For example, the status of a limited company does not suit an informal, fluid partnership. The legal status determines to a large extent the governance structure in which roles and responsibilities, as well as requirements for accountability, are defined by law or by the participants in the partnership.

4. *External conditions*

The fourth building block refers to the external conditions for a successful partnership: the context and the role of government. Government is part of this external context but, in many cases, is also a partner in the partnership.

The role of context has been discussed in almost every chapter in this book: a partnership will not succeed if its ambitions do not fit the political, economic or historical context. The chapters in this book show that the context, in some cases, offers a 'window of opportunity' for new and innovative initiatives but also can set limits.

The second external factor concerns the role of the government. As discussed in the previous section, government matters, although its role can vary from a financial and regulatory one, to one of adaption and 'laissez-faire'. Government can make or break a partnership. Too much (financial) interference can make the partnership too dependent on the government, and too many rules and regulations can smother innovation completely. But on the other hand, the government can be a game-changer in stimulating active or passive innovative bottom-up initiatives, for example, by providing seed money or paving the way for experimental new

initiatives. A successful partnership, therefore, requires a delicate balance between laissez-faire and intervention by the government.

To conclude, partnerships between public and private actors can contribute to the livability of cities if form follows function, if we accept that government matters and we take into account the contingent nature of success.

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