

Effectiveness of Partnerships for Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals: Behavioural Pathways and Impacts

Summary of completed project

Researching the effectiveness of sustainability partnerships: a key question for the 2030 Agenda

- As the challenges facing the international community become more complex and interdependent, partnerships between public and non-State actors have gained momentum as mechanisms of governance across multiple scales and levels, and they are seen as key means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- We still have limited knowledge on the extent to which such expectations may have materialized. No established frameworks or agreed-upon indicators exist at the international level for evaluating partnerships and analysing the mechanisms through which their effects are brought about.
- Two broad questions guided the project. First, can we provide a new framework for understanding the pathways and effects through which partnerships contribute to addressing sustainability problems? Second, can we use such a framework to systematically assess to what extent current partnership arrangements are contributing to such implementation?

A disaggregated framework for understanding partnership effectiveness

- One key problem in assessing partnerships is usually that of untangling their problem-solving impact from other social and policy factors. The project adopted a disaggregated approach by identifying a set of discrete yet inter-related pathways that can be used to gain a larger, cumulative understanding of effectiveness: (i) goal attainment; (ii) creation of value for the partners; (iii) increased collaboration inside the partnership; (iv) impact on affected populations; and (v) influence on collaboration and institutions outside the partnership.
- The project also presented an analysis of several hypotheses about the internal structuring of partnerships and its influence on partnership effectiveness, drawing on the literature on institutional design, cross-sectoral collaboration, and collective action.
- The project sought to combine its innovative framework with a mix of interdisciplinary research methods in order to present new real-world data and case studies on partnership effectiveness across thematic areas (biodiversity, climate, clean energy, natural resource management, children's wellbeing and rights, and global health) and cross-cutting issues.

Partnership effectiveness from local populations to global collaboration

- The nominal attainment of a partnership's self-defined objective, the creation of value for its partners and its effects on their internal collaboration can be seen as intermediate pathways to the problem-solving effectiveness of a partnership, but they are unable to provide a comprehensive measure of its impacts.
- At one end of the spectrum, the most important partnership impacts are often produced at the level of local implementation and through effects on affected populations. Because the notion of sustainable development requires an integrated consideration of the social, economic and environmental effects of partnerships, the presence of such impacts can also be seen as a necessary condition for a partnership's ability to contribute to problem-solving for sustainability. Taking local conditions, the livelihoods of affected populations, and the mediating role of domestic institutions into account may thus play a crucial role in determining overall partnership effectiveness.
- At the other end of the spectrum, the high-order impacts of partnerships on collaborations between external institutions and in wider governance regimes can contribute to problem-solving for sustainability even in cases where a specific initiative do not achieve its own goals, for example through its spill-over effects on organizational learning, capacity-building and dissemination of new knowledge and practices.
- Institutional features and dynamics *do* make a difference on the long-term impacts of a partnership, with an emphasis on the specificity of partnership arrangements, the credible commitment of resources by partners, the capacity to foster adaptation and experimentation through learning-by-doing approaches, and the presence of innovative governance and funding mechanisms.
- At the same time, the success of a partnership model does not guarantee that it will be replicated outside of its geographical and political context or have a catalytic impact on international collaboration. A glaring gap remains for SDG implementation. As individual partnerships are often vulnerable to shifting political interests and gridlocks in international negotiations, they are unlikely to fill it.

Project website: <http://www.effectivenessofpartnerships.org>

Project Publications:

- Andonova, L.B., Faul, M.V., and Piselli, D., eds. 2021, forthcoming. *Partnerships for Sustainability: Pathways to Effectiveness*. Routledge: London.
- Andonova, L. B. 2021, forthcoming. Clean Energy and Decentralized Global Governance. In Barnett, M., Pevehouse, J. and Raustiala, eds. *The Future of Global Governance*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, MA.
- Andonova, L.B., and Piselli, D. 2021, forthcoming. Transnational Partnerships, Domestic Institutions, and Sustainable Development. *World Development* (under peer review).
- Faul, M.V., and Tchilingirian, J. 2021. Structuring the Interstitial Space of Global Financing Partnerships for Sustainable Development: A network analysis. *New Political Economy*, Online First, DOI: [10.1080/13563467.2020.1849082](https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2020.1849082).
- Andonova, L.B., Assayag, M., and Piselli, D. 2020. Public-Private Partnerships. In Morin, Jean-Frederic and Amandine Orsini, eds. *Essential Concepts of Global Environmental Governance (2nd edition)* Routledge: London. DOI: [10.4324/9780367816681](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367816681).

- Michaelowa, A., Michaelowa, K., Shishlov, I., and Brescia, D. 2020. Catalysing Private and Public Action for Climate Change Mitigation: the World Bank's Role in International Carbon. *Climate Policy*, DOI: [10.1080/14693062.2020.1790334](https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1790334).
- Stadtler, L., and Karakulak, Ö. 2020. Broker Organizations to Facilitate Cross-Sector Collaboration: At the Crossroad of Strengthening and Weakening Effects. *Public Administration Review*, 80(3), 360-380, DOI: [10.1111/puar.13174](https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13174)
- Michaelowa, A., Shishlov, I., and Brescia, D. 2019. Evolution of International Carbon Markets: Lessons for the Paris Agreement. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 10(6), e613, DOI: [10.1002/wcc.613](https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.613).
- Andonova, L.B., and Coetzee, K. 2019. Does successful emissions reduction lie in the hands of non-state rather than state actors? In Hulme, M., ed. *Contemporary Climate Change Debates. A Student Primer*. Routledge: London. DOI: [10.4324/9780429446252](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429446252).
- Andonova, L.B., and Sun, Y. 2019. Private Governance in Developing Countries: Drivers of Voluntary Carbon Offset Programs. *Global Environmental Politics*, 2019, 19:1, 99-122, DOI: [10.1162/glep_a_00496](https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00496).
- Andonova, L.B. 2018. The Power of the Public Purse: Financing of Global Health Partnerships and Agenda Setting for Sustainability, *Chinese Journal of Population Resources and Environment*, 16(3), 186-196, DOI [10.1080/10042857.2018.1502388](https://doi.org/10.1080/10042857.2018.1502388).