Partnering to facilitate smallholder inclusion in value chains

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1. Introduction

In light of the importance of agricultural activities for the livelihoods of millions of people in rural areas, poverty-alleviating growth depends to a high degree on access to lucrative consumer markets. However, smallholder farmers in developing countries face various institutional constraints that hinder them taking advantage of market opportunities. A lack of information on prices and technologies, lacking connections to market actors, underdeveloped financial markets and scale diseconomies make it difficult for smallholders to reach out to international or new domestic markets. Thus, new institutional arrangements are needed to fill the gap in between current local practices/institutions and the institutions required for participation in value chains. As an example of a new institutional arrangement, partnerships between businesses, NGOs, farmers and public agencies have emerged to create new and better outlets for smallholders' products, achieve positive socio-economic and environmental outcomes for farmers, and serve the purpose of pro-poor growth. By building on the expertise of each member, partnerships are an example of collective action based on differences in comparative advantage (Narrod et al. 2009) and agency specialization to create collaborative advantage. Actors have different roles that can complement each other and address the institutional constraints faced by smallholders, thereby fulfilling development goals and private business interests at the same time. For this reason, partnerships have made a remarkable breakthrough in the international development discourse.

However, little is known about the partnership set-up and characteristics to advance the inclusion of smallholders in value chains. Moreover, it is not clear how partnerships deal with the institutional constraints faced by smallholders and to what extent they engage in institutional change. The unclear relationship between partnerships and institutional change for smallholder inclusion is startling, considering that partnerships should be defined in terms of the tasks of institutional change that is to be achieved. In view of the great diversity in the approaches used by partnerships regarding the issue of smallholder inclusion, this paper attempts to clear some of the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of partnerships in value chains. The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between the institutional change required for smallholder inclusion and the type of partnerships that have been set up to achieve this goal. Examining this relationship for 13 case studies from previous research conducted by the authors, this paper will advance the identification of some of the important aspects on which partnerships differ and which are required for institutional change.

This paper proceeds as follows. We first elucidate the institutional constraints faced by smallholder farmers in developing countries and then sketch the emergence of partnerships as new institutional arrangements that deal with these institutional constraints. This is followed by a literature review on partnerships to extract key themes on which partnerships differ and which commonly serve as building blocks for partnership typologies. We will operationalize some of these key elements of partnerships based on our case studies and establish their relationship with the areas of institutional change required for smallholder inclusion. This will enable us to identify the opportunities and limitations associated with partnerships in value chains.

2. Methods and case studies

This paper forms part of the project "Value chain governance and endogenous growth: How can NGOs, firms and governments achieve inclusion and poverty reduction?" of the Dutch-based Development Policy Review Network (DPRN). The aim is to build on the insights and knowledge of researchers active in the field of value chains in order to create synergies and draw new conclusions, without necessarily conducting new empirical research. Accordingly, this paper is based on a literature review which comprises literature on smallholder farmers and value chains on the one hand, and on partnerships and collaboration on the other. Furthermore, the paper makes use of previous empirical studies conducted by the authors as listed below, which amounts to 13 different partnerships in different value chains as case studies.

PAPER	CASE STUDIES
Helmsing, A.H.J. (2008). NGOs and Markets? Small producers and agro-exports in Peru. Draft version.	Partnership in the asparagus sector in Peru *(case 1)*
Helmsing, A.H.J. and Cartwright, A (forthcoming). Enterprise and livelihood and local economic development with a case study of the Wool Chain Initiative, Eastern Cape, South Africa. (JDAAS).	Partnership in the wool chain in South Africa *(case 2)*
Van Wijk, J., van der Linden, V. and de Boer, D. (2009). Economic Impact of NGO-Private Sector Partnerships for Value Chain Development in West Africa. Case studies of Organic fair trade mango in Burkina Faso and Mali Organic fair trade cotton-garment in Burkina Faso, and Sorghum-beer in Ghana. Draft, not for distribution. Expert Centre for Sustainable Business and Development Cooperation (ECSAD)	Three partnerships in Africa: Mango sector (Burkina Faso), cotton sector (Mali), sorghum-beer chain (Ghana) *(cases 3-5)*
Bitzer, V., Glasbergen, P. and Arts, B. (forthcoming). Partnerships in agricultural commodity chains: evidence from the coffee sector in Peru. Submitted.	Six partnerships in the coffee chain in Peru *(cases 6-11)*
Bitzer, V. and Glasbergen, P. (forthcoming). Partnerships for sustainable change in cotton: an institutional analysis of African cases. Draft version.	Two partnerships in the cotton sector in Africa *This paper contains six case studies, but partly overlaps with Van Wijk et al. 2009 (see above) *(cases 12-13)*

3. Institutional constraints faced by smallholder farmers

Although smallholder farmers dominate much of agricultural production in developing countries and show a higher efficiency per unit of production than larger farms (Hazell et al. 2007, Amanor 2009), smallholder farmers face a multitude of constraints that prevent them from accessing profitable market opportunities. Combined with more general problems of poor infrastructure, low education and poor health, Dorward et al. observe that there are important technological and institutional gaps that prevent small producers from producing for and transacting in higher value markets (Dorward et al. 2005).

Adopting an old-institutionalist view, Hodgson defines institutions as "durable systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interaction" (Hodgson 2003: 163). He distinguishes between primary, evolved and designed institutions. Primary ones are the most basic and resilient; evolved institutions have their counterpart in habits and routines; and designed institutions are the result of reflexive or deliberative actions and policies. Consisting of regulative, normative, and cognitive structures, institutions are both constraints and prescriptions to the behaviour of individuals and organizations. They reduce uncertainty, make behaviour more predictable, and unburden social actors from continuously making strategic decisions (Goodin 1996, Offe 1996, Scott 1995). Contrary to the old institutionalist approach, new institutional economists accentuate only the behaviour-constraining aspect of institutions and speak of institutions as the 'rules of the game' (North 1990), which reduce transaction costs and solve problems of information asymmetry (Williamson 2000). Applied to rural areas in developing countries, the new institutional economics perspective has particularly emphasized the role of high transaction costs which lead to coordination failure and hence, market failure. This, in turn, raises transaction costs and thus fuels a 'low level equilibrium trap', in which rural producers are caught (Dorward et al. 2003). Market failure can bear particularly heavy on smallholder producers as they face a number of constraints, including weak organization, high transaction costs and lack of information, which puts them in a disadvantageous position for participating in value chains under appropriate terms. Thus, whereas market institutions appear as a neutral regulatory framework that serves all market actors in an equal way, market institutions also have normative components. They can be biased against specific groups, since market institutions determine who participates in markets, the objects of exchange, the rights and obligations of the participants, as well as the rules for exchange (Chang 2002). Worldwide, business environments tend to be less favourable for small enterprises, especially in developing countries (Schiffer, Weder 2001).

To approach the institutional constraints faced by smallholder farmers in developing countries, we have identified the following four domains to be most important:

1. *Access to technology.* Agro-food chains have experienced rapid change over recent years and demands on suppliers have risen substantially. Technological and managerial innovations are required to link up with (global) value chains and comply with transforming consumer preferences as well as public and private regulations. However, smallholders often have little idea of the quality standards they must meet, or they lack the knowledge and technology required to meet such standards. More generally, they lack knowledge and skills in modern production and management techniques. This situation is aggravated by lacking or poor information systems in developing countries, including agricultural extension services. Following liberalization and privatization policies, information and extension services were drastically reduced by governmental agencies, while new systems by the private sector have not been able to replace the role and tasks previously fulfilled by the state.
2. *Access to capital.* An important barrier that prevents smallholders from being included in value chains is the limited access to finance. On the one hand, this is a problem of limited offer due to the reduction in rural credit over the last two decades in developing countries. On the other hand, this is a structural problem as smallholders are unable to borrow or only at excessively high interest rates. Farmers are often not considered to be credit worthy because they lack collateral, do not command an ensured income, and have the reputation of behaving opportunistically when it comes to contract compliance. In addition to working capital, farmers also lack access to other financial services, including investment capital, alternative collaterals and risk management.
3. *Access to markets.* One of the major impediments for farmers in developing countries is the absence of markets that absorb surpluses in regions where the majority of the population is engaged in farming. Any surplus of a locally produced crop therefore results in a collapsing local market price, which is a disincentive for designing longer term upgrading strategies (van Huis et al. 2007). At the same time, when markets are not accessible, smallholder farmers capture little of the value that they create and distribution costs for rurally produced goods are very high (Gulati et al. 2007).
4. *Access to farmer organization.* Due to their size, small producers cannot benefit from economies of scale that would help to reduce production and/or transaction costs. One way of circumventing the problem of scale diseconomies is by enabling collective action in the form of producer organizations. By now there is increasing evidence that producer organizations allow smallholder farmers to participate in markets more effectively (Markelova et al. 2009). Amongst others, producer organizations can improve the position of smallholder farmers by reducing transaction costs of accessing inputs and marketing, and obtaining access to information, technology and credit opportunities. This enables smallholders to compete with larger producers and improve their bargaining power vis-à-vis larger buyers. However, in situations of policy biases favouring larger farmers and failure to provide rural infrastructure, collective action alone cannot correct market failure (The World Bank 2007).

Firms are normally the key players in the technological and institutional processes that can overcome the gaps between local institutions/practices and institutions required for participation in value chains, with a more or less active role of governments. As Dorward argued on different occasions for developing countries, NGOs can help overcome market and government failures in these processes (Dorward et al. 2003). As a source of collective action, partnerships are presumed in this paper to hold the same potential and generate change for the benefit of smallholders. However, as evolutionary theory recognizes, any (technological) change is influenced by institutional structures, which can either be supporting or obstructing, and which may have a strong influence on the degree and speed of acceptance of new technologies into an economic system. Institutions are thus seen as complementary to technology, which help organizing the division of labour around these new technologies (Nelson 2002).

4. Partnerships as new institutional arrangements in value chains

Partnerships are defined as voluntary and collaborative arrangements between actors from two or more sectors of society that have an institutionalized, yet non-hierarchic structure and strive for a sustainability goal (Glasbergen, Biermann & Mol 2007). In the context of value chains, partnerships bring together chain-internal and chain-external actors and focus on various aspects of smallholder inclusion. Inclusion means that smallholders receive access to a (strand of a) value chain that they have not participated in previously, that they are able to continuously participate in the chain with improved rewards, and that they can voluntarily exit the chain (Riisgaard et al. 2008). In other words, inclusion of small farmers denotes their ability to sustain their participation in a given supply chain over time, which, however, "does not indicate any differences in welfare outcomes as such" (Berdegué, Biénabe & Peppelenbos 2008: 5).

Projects are the most common vehicle to carry out partnership activities. In general, such activities are aimed at strengthening the capacities of producers and producers' organizations and promoting good agricultural practices, often in combination with some kind of quality certification, which then serves as a means to get access to new buyers and markets. This is where the commonalities between partnerships usually end and as a result, no common definition of partnerships has been agreed upon. This has led to an inflationary use of the concept of partnership, which is employed to label anything from loose networks and ad hoc projects with alternating partners to long-term interventions and intense collaborations between a steady number of partners who share risks and resources. Moreover, NGOs, public agencies and private sector partners operate within different paradigms and may have different conceptions of the final objective of the partnership. In an examination of six cross-sectoral partnerships in Southern Africa, Rein and Stott discover that none of the partnerships had defined the core principles for working together or established adequate provisions for collective decision-making processes (Rein, Stott 2009). The ambiguity surrounding partnerships also reflects in the different perceptions of the value of partnerships. Some endorse them as instruments to foster pro-poor growth and connect farmers in developing countries to global consumer markets, while others criticize them as tools that reinforce the neoliberal market agenda and make little contribution to development (Utting, Zammit 2009, Reed, Reed 2009).

In light of the difficulties of smallholders to participate meaningfully in value chains, the rise of partnerships is mainly connected to the complementarities of participating actors, which, in theory, allows for the inclusion of smallholder farmers by improving the division of labour along value chains. Extending Hall and Soskice's concept of institutional complementarity to partnerships, actors can be said to be complementary if the presence (or efficiency) of one actor increases the returns for (or efficiency of) the other (Hall, Soskice 2001). Thus, roles that were traditionally played by one actor can benefit from being shared with, or transferred to, other actors (Narrod et al. 2009), thereby enabling the creation of collaborative advantage based on differences in comparative advantage. The increased recognition of complementarity stems from two sources: firstly, from failures within each societal domain, making single actor solutions insufficient, and secondly, from the growing complexity of problems and new drivers that make the exploitation of collaborative advantage more attractive to each actor than before.

In a setting of structural problems of poor infrastructure (Kydd, Dorward 2004), the inadequacy of single-actor approaches is rooted in different kinds of 'failures' associated with unilateral action of either market actors, governments, donors and civil society organizations. Market failures arise in situations where "market relations do not establish themselves due to lack of capacities/competencies of economic agents and/or lack of necessary institutional arrangements" (Helmsing 2008). Market failures are pervasive because of asymmetric information, high transaction costs, scale diseconomies and monopoly power (The World Bank 2007). Furthermore, value chain development requires significant simultaneous and complementary investments by important market participants, which, however, may be considered too risky to be worthwhile, as underdeveloped market and infrastructure in rural areas present highly unattractive investment opportunities (Dorward et al. 2005, Poulton, Kydd & Dorward 2006). This leads to an uneven development biased against smallholder farmers.

Other authors point out that partnerships are not only a reaction to market failure but also to state failure, e.g. the failure to provide public goods, including physical and institutional infrastructure, and deliver social and economic development (Utting, Zammit 2009, Kolk, Van Tulder & Kostwinder 2008). Before the liberalization agenda of the 1980s and 1990s, many governments have responded to market failures by taking over private roles in agriculture dealing with the provision of inputs, credit and marketing services. The results, however, were poor because government interventions are often ill-informed, poorly implemented and subject to rent-seeking and corruption, leading to government failures (The World Bank 2007). After liberalization and the retreat of the state, the other side of state failure became visible – the failure to provide "the institutional support required for privatized competitive markets to become effective in the challenging conditions where poverty is most intractable" (Dorward et al. 2005: 5). Many governments in developing countries simply lack the regulation and enforcement capacities, and are unable to provide the required support services to rural producers.

In the context of agriculture-based growth, one can also speak of 'donor failure', which denotes the existence of fragmented, overlapping, discontinuous, and sometimes contradictory donor interventions (The World Bank 2007). Designed to promote rural growth, agricultural projects often fail to place smallholders within value chains that link producers and buyers, thereby revealing an imperfect understanding of the challenges faced by smallholders (Humphrey 2008). Large aid flows also undermine developing country governments, create scope for corruption and erode governments' accountability to their constituencies (The World Bank 2007).

Similarly, NGOs have not managed to address smallholder constraints that both the market and public sector have not been able to solve, giving rise to insinuations of 'NGO failure' or 'good intentions failure'. NGO interventions have been criticized for neither benefitting the poorest of the poor, nor creating bottom-up development processes (Kolk, Van Tulder & Kostwinder 2008). While some NGO projects have worked well in some contexts, Zaidi argues that the NGO model has inherent failures that limit it to being a provider of a minimal amount of 'band aid social welfare' (Zaidi 2004: 198).

Next to these 'negative' drivers, there are various 'positive' drivers, originating from several interconnected developments taking place in and around value chains since the 1990s, which make the exploitation of collaborative advantage attractive to each actor. Generally, this refers to the fact that partnerships provide access to specialized know-how and resources for each actor, while spreading risks and responsibilities.

More specifically, market actors are mainly driven to collaborate by considerations of corporate social responsibility, chain responsibility (as opposed to chain liability) and the need to secure supply. In a business environment characterized by increasing levels of competition and concentration, private food safety standards have experienced high proliferation rates as a means to respond to consumer concerns about food quality and safety issues, and to exploit the spectacular growth of the sustainable and high quality product segment. This development fosters a general tendency in 'global sourcing' strategies to establish a pool of qualified, trusted suppliers with whom long-term stable relationships are sought (Muller et al. 2006).

At the same time, businesses, especially large multinational companies, have come under increasing pressure from non-governmental organizations and the media pertaining to renewed scandals about labour exploitation, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. Combined with fierce international competition and the growing significance of corporate reputation, this has provoked an overall move of companies towards corporate social responsibility (CSR), strategic philanthropy and stakeholder engagement to demonstrate the inclusion of environmental and social concerns into their business practices. From a liability approach of international supply chain management with little stakeholder engagement, researchers observe a shift towards chain responsibility, where companies take responsibility for the social and/or environmental performance at other stages of the chain, and engage with stakeholders to establish a pro-active management strategy (van Tulder, Van Wijk & Kolk 2009, Blowfield 2003).

Meanwhile, the role of businesses in development began changing as well. 'Value chain promotion' to integrate smallholder farmers from developing countries into global or regional markets has featured increasingly prominent on the agenda of development agencies and international NGOs. Previously regarded as the "enemies, unconscious engines, or ungrateful beneficiaries of development" (Bendell 2005: 363), businesses as powerful chain actors have now been assigned a new role in development, which is complementary to the role of external chain promoters and chain service providers, such as NGOs and government agencies. This new embracement of businesses is also rooted in disappointment about the impact of more traditional development assistance (Kolk, Van Tulder & Kostwinder 2008) and the placement of the market economy at the centre of development (Helmsing, Knorringa 2009). With regard to smallholder farmers, this implies that helping them to organize via producer cooperatives is not sufficient to access value chains. Instead of merely providing agricultural extension services, producer training or input supply, partnerships specifically strive to connect smallholder farmers with market actors, thus avoiding past mistakes of training producers and organizing producers without sufficient market demand or established linkages to market outlets. Indirectly, the integration of business goes hand in hand with a parallel need of NGOs, but also aid agencies, for new sources of funding, as government funding is declining, while the activities of NGOs are increasing.

Moreover, the changing role of governments contributed to the rise of partnerships. As part of the privatization strategies of the neoliberal agenda, a shift in the role of government occurred "from doing to ensuring", which refers to the renunciation of state-led development and the acceptance of markets as the engines for development (Reed, Reed 2009, Miraftab 2004). As governments retreated from various functions in and around value chains, including marketing and credit provision, partnerships with private sector parties offered a means to enhance the functioning of value chains while cutting government expenditures and reducing its area of responsibility. Nonetheless, governments only participate randomly in partnerships (Bitzer, Francken & Glasbergen 2008), which is reflected in our case studies and poses the question of the autonomous role and strategic importance of governments in partnerships.

5. Tasks of partnerships for institutional change

As indicated earlier, smallholder farmers face various institutional barriers related to the four domains of technology, capital, market, and farmer organization. Partnerships promoting smallholder inclusion address these constraints to varying degrees and construct new institutional arrangements in order to make the technological improvements work for small-scale producers. This could entail the provision of training and technical assistance to farmers to improve quality, processing and marketing, or the establishment of market information systems. While it is relatively easy to identify technological change, the institutional dimension is much more difficult to determine and categorize, as contexts vary greatly from country to country and from sector to sector. The degree of institutional change is defined by the mismatch between locally existing primary, evolved, and designed institutions and the institutional arrangements required for smallholder inclusion in value chains. According to the four institutional domains, partnerships can engage in institutional change in the following areas:

1. *Institutional arrangements associated with access to technology.* Partnerships commonly address the lack of technology, information and knowledge of smallholder farmers in two alternative ways. One option is to broker and/or develop institutional arrangements to enable cooperation between public technology providers on the one hand, such as agricultural research institutes and government extension services, and farmers and commercial buyers on the other. The aim is to make research and extension more responsive to the changing market demand, while farmers may have to change some of their habits, such as seed saving, in case that improves productivity or the quality of the produce. Another option for partnerships is to involve buyers directly in making available essential knowledge and technology to farmers included in their supply chain, and let them decide the rules under which this happens. The technology required also depends on whether partnerships focus on a single product via a specialization of producers or on a variety of products by means of farm or product diversification. In the case of farm level diversification, a multiplication of the institutional gaps occurs, as the engagement in new products requires the development of new chains, comprising different opportunities and constraints than the 'original' chain. Hence, institutional complexity increases.
2. *Institutional arrangements associated with access to capital.* Partnerships can confront the limited access to finance of smallholders by brokering between banks, traders, farmers, and governments with the objective of reducing risks for the banks or other credit facilitators. A higher payback rate can be ensured by promoting arrangements such as farmer credit groups, offering credit institutions some control over the farmer's revenues, or by training farmers in financial and contract discipline. Another alternative may be an interlocking credit management agreed between banks, NGO and small farmer (e.g. NGO and small farmer co-signing). Partnerships can also directly provide loans to farmers or their organizations, either in cash or in-kind.
3. *Institutional arrangements associated with access to markets.* Partnerships address the lack of profitable markets by pursuing longer-term buyers' commitment to farmers with varying contractual arrangements. Partnerships may push for a multiple-year market guarantee by the buyer in terms of volumes and prices. Linking farmers to markets can either be done by focusing on existing markets or exploring new market opportunities. The former includes strengthening the position of farmers and improving the functioning of existing markets, whereas the latter entails a strategy towards entering niche markets or switching the crops cultivated (Biénabe et al. 2004).
4. *Institutional arrangements related to farmer organization.* Partnerships often seek to form farmer groups to achieve economies of scale and improve the position of smallholder farmers. In case producer organizations already exist, partnerships can offer management training to stabilize the organization and strengthen its negotiation position vis-à-vis potential buyers.

While this clarifies the tasks of partnerships for smallholder inclusion, it is still unclear what the relationship between these tasks and other partnership characteristics is. The following literature review on partnership typologies serves to extract key themes on which partnerships generally differ.

6. Partnership typologies: a literature review

The general literature on partnerships for sustainable development offers relatively few typologies for their classification. Selsky and Parker, for instance, merely differentiate partnerships according to the actors involved, resulting in four categories depending on whether partnerships are business-NGO, business-state, state-NGO, or business-state-NGOs partnerships (Selsky, Parker 2005). However, instead of formulating a typology, this rather points to the prevailing intersectoral character of partnerships, i.e., that they are formed between two or more parties from different societal domains. In a similar vein, a categorization of partnerships in terms of the issue areas they address, the countries of implementation, the type of lead partner and similar practical considerations (Andonova, Levy 2003, Biermann et al. 2007) does not serve to establish a more theoretical foundation for partnership typologies. This also holds for classifying partnerships according to whether they work at micro level (project-oriented partnerships), meso level (sector or chain-oriented partnerships) or at macro level (globally-oriented partnerships) (Kolk, Van Tulder & Kostwinder 2008).

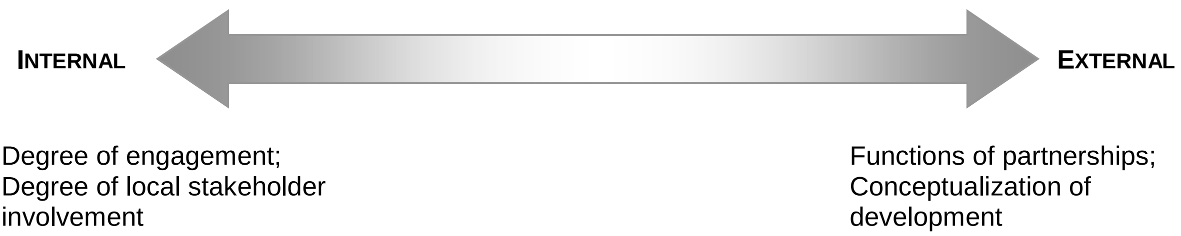
More helpful for our purposes, because pointing to the 'core business' of partnerships, is the approach to delineate partnerships by identifying and classifying their functions. For instance, the UN Global Compact groups partnerships under four functions (Witte, Reinicke 2005): advocacy partnerships fulfil an agenda-setting role to advance a certain cause; partnerships developing norms and standards promote responsible business behaviour; partnerships sharing and coordinating resources serve to disseminate expertise, knowledge and technology; and lastly, partnerships harnessing markets for development support the exploration and expansion of sustainable markets. Glasbergen discusses four similar partnership functions (Glasbergen 2007). First, partnerships can raise awareness and influence discourses. Second, they can concentrate on the dissemination and accreditation of information on sustainable development, such as the Global Reporting Initiative. Third, partnerships can provide technology in management processes so as to support the resolution of a given sustainability issue. Finally, partnerships can develop a new, sustainable product or service. A more elaborate approach is offered by Binder et al. who focus on partnerships in development cooperation (Binder, Palenberg & Witte 2007). They connect the actual functions of partnerships with the relationships between donor agencies and businesses. For this purpose, they establish a two by three matrix which places donor interests on the horizontal axis and business interests on the vertical axis. Since the likelihood of partnerships emerging in three of the six resulting fields is low, the authors come up with three primary partnership categories. First, 'Probing Business Opportunities' are partnerships that explore new business opportunities in developing countries through investment studies and pilots. Second, 'Fostering Sustainable Business' partnerships provide business actors with incentives to make actual investments with high development value in developing countries. Lastly, 'Corporate Development Responsibility' partnerships stimulate corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities above and beyond a company's core business to enhance the development impact of business activities. Although Binder et al. acknowledge that each partnership model faces different trade-offs and challenges, the last model seems to enjoy most popularity among donor agencies as it promises a more direct development impact and has the potential to encourage self-sustaining business schemes over time.

However, as with most categories mentioned above, this classification is still very broad and lacks clear demarcation lines. Particularly the final category, 'Corporate Development Responsibility' partnerships appears to be the most frequent one in practice and thus requires further specification. This is done by Reed and Reed, who propose four partnership models in which businesses largely try to demonstrate responsible business behaviour with more or less positive impacts on development (Reed, Reed 2009). Different conceptualizations of development and different approaches to regulating international economic activity serve as the main distinguishing variables between the categories, combined with the degree to which stakeholders are able to influence the respective partnerships. Whereas 'conventional business partnerships' epitomize the classical definition of public-private partnerships and function to improve the delivery of public services, the remaining three categories are directed at rule-setting to impose greater control on corporate activities to varying degrees. For this purpose, the development of codes of conduct, certification schemes and sustainability standards are at the core of partnership activities. However, 'corporate social responsibility partnerships' are prone to serving business interests more than any others, whereas 'corporate accountability' and 'social economy partnerships' are based on explicit scepticism of or criticism on, respectively, corporate social responsibility behaviour of businesses as a means to achieving positive development impacts. Social economy partnerships even postulate an alternative model of globalization aimed at empowering the poor via collective entrepreneurship, long-term trade relationships and strong linkages to social movements. Reed and Reed's four partnership typologies are the most extensive ones, identifying the fundamental and often contrasting approaches to development and globalization, and thereby contribute to an enhanced understanding of the linkages between partnerships, responsible business behaviour, and development. In a comparable manner, Utting and Zammit distinguish whether partnerships promote (a) neoliberalism, which maintains the primacy of market forces; (b) embedded liberalism, which accepts the reality of economic liberalization but calls for institutions that alleviate its consequences, or (c) alternative globalization, which seeks greater control on corporate activities (Utting, Zammit 2009).

These typologies of partnerships all deal with the interaction of partnerships with their external environment. When looking at partnership-internal factors suitable for creating partnership typologies, the literature on collaboration offers a valuable point of departure by examining partnerships on a continuum of rising degrees of engagement. A distinction is often made between networking/communication, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration, which differ in terms of commitment, trust, resource-sharing, and goal alignment. Camarinha-Matos & Afsarmanesh consider networking/communication as the most basic form which only entails information exchange (Camarinha-Matos, Afsarmanesh 2006). If the activities of the participants are adjusted or aligned to achieve efficiency gains, whilst different goals persist, one can speak of coordination. This can be 'upgraded' to cooperation in case resources are being shared and goals among the participants are compatible. Finally, if risks, responsibilities, and rewards are also shared, collaboration takes place. Rather than being about agreement, collaboration is about the willingness to change and create something new (Denise 1999). Thus, partnerships can be relatively loose groupings of different parties or intense collaborations where partners share resources and strive for a common goal. While the former are frequently philanthropic relationships, in which companies fund particular charitable projects unrelated to their core business, the later are often strategic alliances which involve core business activities and thus require a strong degree of engagement (Ashman 2001). This corresponds to the 'collaboration continuum' of Austin, where the philanthropic stage and the integrative stage constitute opposing ends of a spectrum, whilst the middle ground is identified as the transactional stage (Austin 2000). Consequently, philanthropic engagement of businesses embodies the most elementary level of engagement, in which the NGO is funding-driven and the company altruistically or pragmatically driven. Charitable donations, benefaction and patronage are examples of such activities (Seitanidi, Ryan 2007). When the relationship between the partners moves into the transactional stage, the interaction entails explicit resource exchanges and focuses on specific activities (Austin 2007), including 'corporate social marketing' and 'social issues marketing' (Seitanidi, Ryan 2007). The integrative stage presents the highest strategic level of engagement and implies that the partners have more and deeper points of intersection in terms of mission, strategy and activities (Austin 2007). A similar approach suggested by Casado is to look at networks as the loosest form of relationships between actors, which can change into coalitions, alliances/associations, and joint businesses/new institutions, as commitment, interdependence, risks, and benefits increase (Casado 2008). With rising engagement, results of the partnership become more specific and responsibilities vis-à-vis third parties expand. Thus, the functions of partnerships alter and possibly amplify as the degree of engagement between the partners increases.

Finally, partnerships can be classified according to the degree of local stakeholder involvement. On a general note, local stakeholder involvement is thought to be desirable as it ensures that local needs are recognized and gains are passed onto the local population. However, it may not always be feasible to achieve systematic participation of local groups due to contextual constraints or cost and benefit considerations. In other cases, it may simply not be practical to include local groups in all stages of the partnering process (Witte, Reinicke 2005). Thus, while the activities of most partnerships in global value chains are based on the perception of producer benefits, partnerships may not actually work this way. Accordingly, Rein and Stott (2009) discuss a rough scale, which ranges from little stakeholder involvement or voice – stakeholders only have a passive role – to stakeholder involvement being of fundamental importance to partnering. The former would entail that ownership lies with the 'foreign' partnership benefactors, for instance with NGOs or businesses, while the latter would place ownership to the local community or producers. A situation of shared ownership between all partnership actors could also be possible.

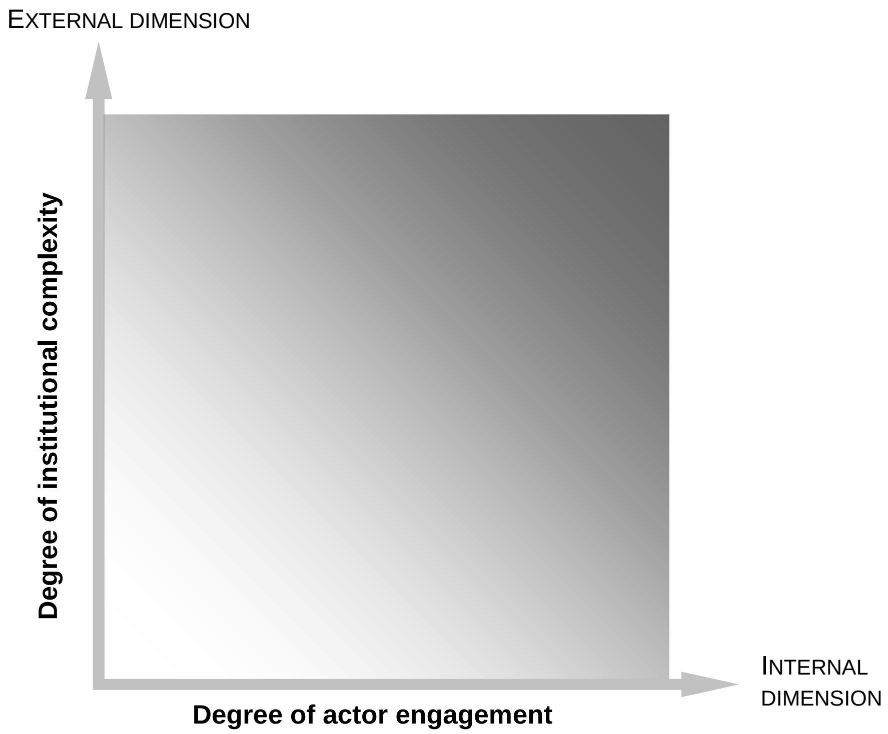
The following figure illustrates the key themes distilled from the literature regarding partnership typologies:



7. Conceptual framework

The literature review has shown that partnerships are often typified along the two dimensions of partnership-*internal* factors, i.e. those aspects which regard the internal configuration of a partnership, and partnership-*external* factors, i.e. those aspects which portray how partnerships interact with their external environment. We propose to maintain such a division and examine the characteristics of partnerships along an internal and an external axis.

Concerning the internal dimension, the literature review delivered relevant insights, which can be applied in this framework, as regards the degree of actor engagement and stakeholder involvement. In terms of the external dimension, however, the literature review proved less helpful. A distinction between different functions of partnerships, such as advocacy, information dispersion or norm-development, does not apply to our paper because we only look at partnerships that (aim to) fulfil the function of including smallholders in value chains. The differences between our case studies are more nuanced and owed to the fact that they operate in different institutional contexts, having to face different institutional challenges. Such institutional challenges are caused by market failures and can, for instance, relate to access to technology, markets or capital, which, depending on the context, can be more or less complex. Therefore, the external dimension of our matrix deals with the degree of institutional complexity. This matrix can be depicted as follows:



Internal dimension: degree of actor engagement

Taking into account the insights gained by the literature review, we identify two main aspects which make up the degree of engagement: the degree of collaboration and the degree of (local) stakeholder engagement.

The **degree of collaboration** classifies partnerships based on the interaction among partnership members, which ranges from networking to collaboration. If the interaction between the actors involved takes place only irregularly or temporarily, we speak of a *broker network*. The objective of such a broker network is to establish new linkages between actors along the value chain, with parties from outside the value chain often assuming the role of a broker. By creating a new actor constellation, a broker network can help increasing the purchase of a particular smallholder product, for instance sustainable coffee or organic mangoes. A targeted intervention at smallholder level is often on a short-term, singular basis. *Strategic alliances* likewise connect producers and buyers along the value chain, but, following transaction cost economics, they require closer cooperation between the actors, including greater information sharing and a higher frequency or amount of supply (Sartorius, Kirsten 2007). Thus, a strategic alliance of is greater importance to the core business of each partner, including NGOs or governments, than a broker network. Activities with smallholder producers are usually carried out within two to four years and are intended to stimulate the self-help capacity of producers. *Collaborative partnerships* are placed even further on the engagement continuum. Partners share risks and resources and are equally involved in planning and decision-making. Individual commitment and the intensity of interactions are presumed to be very high. Activities on the ground are focused on producer support and are implemented within a timeframe of at least four years. The degree of engagement is also reflected in the degree of formalization of partnerships. The more intense the level of collaboration between actors, the greater is the need for partnership activities to be based on formal procedures, rules and regulations, which are contractually established between the parties. Thus, the partnership-internal governance structure, including decision-making procedures and individual obligations, depends to a large extent on the degree of collaboration. This is also reflected in the extent of formalization of objectives and the establishment of a detailed work plan to achieve goals and targets. Further governance indicators include the specification of start and end dates and the mode of decision-making (see table).

The **degree of local stakeholder engagement** has been reviewed rather sceptically in the literature. Researchers note a general absence of local stakeholder involvement in partnerships, be it farmers, producer organizations, communities, or local governments (Rein, Stott 2009, Hoering 2003). As a result, many partnership interventions are planned and designed without the participation of the target group, such as producer organizations, but later on depend on the target group for the implementation of partnership activities. This can lead to local stakeholders being instrumentalized for purposes not determined by them, ultimately resulting in less effective partnerships. Getting local stakeholders involved from the beginning is, of course, not an easy undertaking. Since individual farmers cannot serve as partnership members to due scale limitations, some kind of producer organization has to act on their behalf. However, producer organizations are extremely diverse in their constitution, capabilities, resources and assets, and also regarding their local conditions (agro-ecological conditions, etc.). Thus, partnerships must be adapted to the specific producer organization at hand in terms of what goals are realistic to achieve with what kind of resources. Even then, involving producer organizations can be complicated. Slingerland et al. describe situations where farmers showed strong resistance against being organized in producer groups, due to limited individual opportunities to participate and prevailing risks of corruption (Slingerland et al. 2006).

The most essential obstacle complicating local stakeholder involvement is their lack of resources. This includes a lack of information on markets, a lack of human and financial resources, and a lack of bargaining power vis-à-vis international buyers. The inadequate representation of local stakeholders is not limited to the question of farmer participation, however. In a study on twelve partnerships in the global coffee chain, Bitzer et al. find that a pattern of strong representation of organizations from coffee consuming countries and weak involvement of organizations from coffee producing countries pervades the whole range of partnership actors (Bitzer, Francken & Glasbergen 2008). Not only producers are insufficiently involved, but also governments, businesses and NGOs from developing countries (ibid.).

In order to place our partnerships on the matrix presented above, we have chosen to rank each partnership on eight variables, which together represent the degree of actor engagement and the degree of institutional complexity. We have applied a scale of “0”, “1” and “2”, on which 0 indicates a low degree of engagement or complexity (or a non-applicability) and 2 a high degree of engagement or complexity. Thus, on each dimension a partnership can attain a maximum ‘score’ of eight points.

The following criteria and indicators have been employed:

Criteria	**Indicators for ranking**		
	2	**1**	**0**

DEGREE OF ACTOR ENGAGEMENT[1]			
1) Degree of formalization of the partnership	Common objectives, formalized planning and budget, agreed upon between all actors	Only broad objectives, formalized planning concerns only a certain number of partnership actors	Ad hoc planning and implementation
2) Degree of producer organization involvement	Participation of PO vital for the whole partnership, from design to monitoring	Participation of PO only for the implementation stages	No PO involvement
3) Degree of domestic government involvement	Participation of domestic government is vital for the whole partnership, from design to monitoring	Participation of domestic government only for the implementation stages	No involvement of domestic government
4) Degree of private sector involvement	Lead firm involved	Private sector actor involved (but not the lead firm)	No private sector actors involved
DEGREE OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEXITY			
1) Degree of technological challenge	Technology is entirely new. (This includes certified seeds…)	Technology is not entirely new, but only concerns a functional aspect	No new technology
2) Degree of credit provision challenge	Credit provided by developing arrangements between small producers and financial service providers	Credit providing loans by chain promoters	No credit to producers
3) Degree of marketing challenge	Contract farming with new buyers	Improvement of existing marketing arrangements	No marketing arrangements
4) Degree of challenge of producer organizations	Creating new producer organizations	Improvement of existing producer organizations	No producer organizations

8. Results

8.1 General features of partnerships in value chains

The majority of partnerships is relatively recent and has been initiated in the early 2000s. Only three partnerships date back more than ten years ago. NGOs play a leading role in initiating partnerships, whereas businesses and government actors are less active, having initiated three partnerships jointly and another four individually. Only the six coffee partnerships display a more diversified picture and their initiation seems equally spread over NGOs (2), businesses (2) and governments (2).

Although not as active as NGOs, businesses are also involved in most partnerships, contrary to governments, which take part in only half of the case studies. 'Government involvement' actually means that aid agencies or international organizations participate in the

[1] Although the conceptual framework speaks of 'degree of collaboration' and classifies partnerships as either broker networks, strategic alliances or collaborative partnerships, for the time being we have chosen not apply this aspect directly to our case studies, but use representative indicators instead. One such indicator is the 'degree of formalization of the partnerships', in which considerations such as common objectives, planning, mode of decision making as well as clear start and end dates, play a role. The other indicator is the 'degree of private sector involvement'. Depending on the type of partnership, they are more or less integrated in the value chain. More engagement occurs when private sector parties, especially so-called 'lead firms', are involved. 'Lead firm' and involvement' are defined in a broad sense. If the partnership has made agreements/contract with the retailers/global brands this would qualify for a 2.

partnerships, and only in three cases domestic governmental agencies are included as well. This shows that governments are not a direct driver of partnerships. Also indirectly, that is, via policies and regulations, governments do not provoke the emergence of partnerships. Instead, partnerships are a response by both NGOs and businesses to demand changes in the global market. In particular, ethical markets dealing with organic or Fairtrade products have experienced high growth rates over recent years and thus incited the creation of partnerships to address this demand. Other times, partnerships have emerged due to global supply shifts, which give a particular producing country the opportunity to tap into new markets – an opportunity, which can potentially be seized with the help of partnerships. Such changes in demand are complemented by the rising importance of corporate social responsibility, which acts as a driving factor for nearly all partnerships.

The majority of partnerships aim to create new agro-export outlets to market smallholder products in global value chains. Usually this refers to the application of standards at production level, such as organic, Fairtrade or other eco-standards, which is then used as an entry point to find new buyers and sell the product for a premium price. The usage of standards requires partnership actors to look a global market outlet, for standards are only rarely used in domestic chains of developing countries. Only in two cases, partnerships tried to reconfigure existing chains. In the case of the "Wool Initiative", partnership actors have sought to improve the participation of rural farmers in the wool chain by means of training farmers and generating economic upgrading opportunities. The other case, "Cotton made in Africa", also works with an eco-standard, but uses a top-down approach, i.e. established a demand alliance of retailers who commit themselves to purchasing this particular cotton and then trains the farmers to actually produce according to the standard. Thus, the chain actors remain the same.

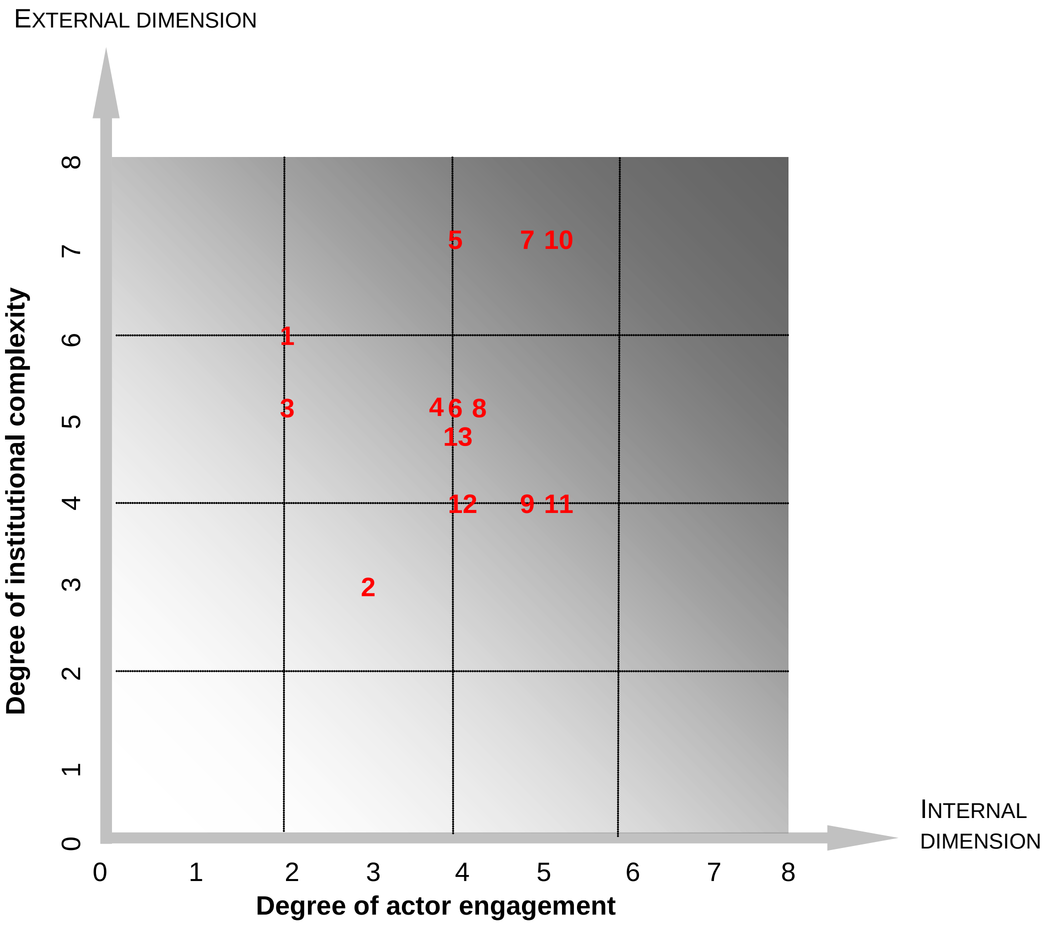
In all cases, partnerships involve chain actors (mostly businesses and producer organizations), chain promoters (e.g. NGOs) and chain service providers (NGOs, businesses or government agencies). This shows that improving complementarity in the division of labour in value chains is a common feature of partnerships. It also points towards a reconceptualization of NGO work on the ground. No longer working against large business actors, partnerships are a manifestation of the new realism of NGOs when trying to improve smallholder livelihoods. This also impacts on the outreach of projects. In contrast to past practices (e.g. Wils 1999), NGOs are able to upscale their interventions through the partnership mechanism. Only two partnerships involve less than 500 producers, whereas five partnerships even reach more than 5,000 producers. The large multi-stakeholder partnership Cotton made in Africa even involves more than 140,000 smallholder farmers into its program. The partnership approach also brings with it a reconceptualization of the notion of development (Helmsing & Knorringa, 2009 forthcoming). The alternative globalization approach, which calls for a greater control on corporate activities under the header of 'another world is possible', hardly plays a role in value chain partnerships. Also the 'Making Markets Work for the Poor' (MMW4P) approach to poverty reduction, which has been supported by several aid agencies over the past few years, does not feature prominently in the approach of partnerships. Instead, the majority of partnerships can be positioned more or less coarsely into a kind of embedded liberalism-approach. Ideas such as 'entrepreneurs are promoters of peace' and 'help others help themselves' are supported in order to enhance rural livelihoods combined with natural resource management. The implementation of the on-the-ground work is carried out by means of projects with producers, such as farmer field schools.

8.2 Placing partnerships in the matrix

Having assigned every partnership a score between 0 and 2 on four criteria each for the degree of actor engagement and the degree of institutional complexity, we come to the following picture:

Partnership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

Degree of engagement													
Formalization	0	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Producer involvement	1	2	0	2	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	0	1
Domestic gov't involvement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Private sector involvement	1	0	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	2	0	2	2
Total engagement	**2**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**4**	**4**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**4**	**4**
Institutional complexity													
Technology	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Credit	1	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	1
Markets	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	0	1	2	0	1	1
Organization	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	0	1
Total Complexity	**6**	**3**	**5**	**5**	**7**	**5**	**7**	**5**	**4**	**7**	**4**	**4**	**5**
Partnership	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**



Degree of actor engagement

Contrary to Rein and Stott's (2009) finding mentioned earlier, which indicated a lack of clear objectives and working methods of partnerships, our case studies give ground for arguing that partnerships are relatively well formalized. Most of them have clear goals, even though these may be broad, which relate to the supply of high quality products to international markets – here we observe a focus on the European market - and the improvement of farmers' livelihoods, both of which are to be achieved through producer training and connections to global buyers. Detailed working plans to carry out partnership activities also exist in most cases, although often the plans are made between different actors on different aspects of the partnership. For instance, the plans regarding the farmers' training may be agreed upon between different actors than the plans concerning purchase volumes. As a partnership type that is subject to greater formalized procedures, because it concerns public (donor) resources, public-private partnerships between development agencies and businesses should have overall plans that connect all areas and activities of the partnership. Decision making procedures, however, represent an aspect of the formalization of partnerships that is less clear. Partially, this ambiguity is owed to the lack of data and information available to the authors. But even in case this information is available, decision making seems to be handled between a limited number of partnership actors and little communication takes place with the remaining partnership actors.

While producer organizations are included in most partnerships, our case studies confirm the observations of other researchers and indicate that producer organizations are mostly involved in the implementation stage and not in the critical planning and design stages. As a result, individual producer organizations are easily replaceable. If a partnership initiator approaches a producer organization as a vehicle to reach farmers and implement on-site activities, it will not be very difficult to find another organization as replacement, in case the first one is not interested in the cooperation or is found to be a difficult partner. In one of the partnerships studied, a coffee partnership in Peru, this was actually the case. Competition and disagreement between the five participating producer organizations became so strong, that two organizations left the partnership and were immediately replaced by a new one (Bitzer et al. forthcoming). Only in three of the cases studied in this paper, producer organizations are critical to the functioning and performance of the whole partnership. For instance, the cotton partnership in Burkina Faso depends to a large extent to the collaboration with the national producer organization UNPCB, which is responsible for the implementation of the organic cotton programs, coordinates the extension services to the producers, manages the certification, including the internal control system, and the commercialization (Van der Linden et al. 2009).

Domestic governments are only included in very few partnerships. In two cases they are in charge of providing extension services, thus act as a kind of service provider that is engaged in the implementation but not in the planning of partnership activities. Government involvement is beneficial to the functioning of the partnership, but not critical. Other service providers could theoretically be found as a replacement. Moreover, the involvement of domestic governments does not extend beyond governmental extension agencies and does not include any high level ministries. Only one partnership has a high level of domestic government involvement and was even initiated by this government agency.

Private sector actors are included in most partnerships and generally represent the lead firm of the respective chain. 'Lead firm' and involvement' are defined in a broad sense. If the partnership has made agreements/contract with the retailers/global brands this qualifies for a high ranking.

Degree of institutional complexity

All partnerships support farmers so that these can comply with product and process quality standards that are required to get entry to value chains. In cases where the lead firms, for instance Starbucks, are included in the partnership, the specific corporate quality standards are being used. In the other cases, non-firm specific quality standards, such as organic or Fairtrade, are being introduced by NGOs or cooperatives. Particularly in coffee, there is a wide variety of standards being promoted by partnerships. The adoption of international, corporate or product specific quality standards requires substantial changes in farming behaviour. In most of these cases, partnerships promote changes in harvesting and post-harvest processes (cleaning, storing and transport). Farmers are also encouraged to adjust their traditional farming habit of saving their own seed (replaced by buying certified seed annually), and shifting to new varieties, possibly higher yielding ones, which also involves substantial changes in farm management. Thus, whilst the promotion of (new) technology used to be the area of governments by means of extension services and research programs, partnerships represent a new source of technological change in agriculture, which can exist complementary to governmental services or even replace them. Global demand acts as a driving force for this development. This does not imply, however, that partnerships need to have lead firms or other private sector actors aboard for upgrading, since product or more generic quality standards, such as GAP and organic, are publicly available.

However, despite high growth rates over recent years, some of these 'specialty' markets are already experiencing a situation of oversupply as ever more producer organizations aim for certification. This leads to major implications: firstly, the price premiums associated with certified products will decrease as supply already outstrips demand. Secondly, standards can easily turn into requirements demanded by the global market as a potential step towards market access. It is not a guarantee for market access, however. Specific links will need to be made to buyers interested in such a product. This shows that chain promoters by themselves, such as NGOs, fare better if they are connected to global market actors.

In eight out of 13 cases, pre-finance is arranged for by the partnership. This is either done through chain external actors, including NGOs, banks or social lending institutes, or through chain internal actors, that is the buyer who mostly provides in-kind pre-finance comprising seed, fertilizer and pesticides. Group finance seems to be the preferred institutional arrangement for providing credit to smallholders. This is a new arrangement for most farmers and requires substantial support from NGO partners. In five cases partnerships do not address the issue of pre-finance at all. Especially the coffee partnerships stand out in this respect, as three out of six do not provide pre-finance to producer organizations. Although the need for pre-harvest inputs is much less in coffee production than in annual crops, loans are required to pay the annual certification costs as well as to carry out processing and exportation of coffee. The lacking credit opportunities present a great barrier to maintain certification and stabilize operations. Interestingly, in our case study sample, there are three partnerships that lack a private sector actor and two of them have not managed to arrange pre-finance from buyers. While our sample size does not allow for conclusions on this matter, it seems worthwhile to explore this aspect in future research.

In the clear majority of cases where private sector actors are involved in a partnership, farmers have at least a contract farming relationship. This does not, however, represent a stable situation. Most contracts are on an annual basis and only in two cases (Guinness Ghana and Tierra Peru), contracts cover a time span of five years or longer. In both cases, the private sector actor is simultaneously the lead firm in the respective chain. Three partnerships do not count with the participation of a business actor (wool case South Africa, cotton-garment Burkina Faso and Norcafé Peru). These partnerships seem to be predominantly supply-oriented because a value chain is not readily available and must be sought. There is no contract, no longer-term perspective of a buyer, and hence no prospect of a price guarantee. This leads to the conclusion that partnerships that include business actors offer more market outlets, which, however, does not imply that long-term contracts in terms of volumes (and prices) like to materialize. Long-term contracts only seem to be realized if the lead firm of the chain is included in the partnership.

Seeking an inlet to reach smallholder farmers, nearly all partnerships cooperate with producer organizations or, in case these do not exist, focus on changing inter-farmer relations with the forming farmer groups. Such groups are required to create certain economies of scale, serve as basic production and certification units, and as credit groups. However, there are important challenges associated with the establishment or strengthening of producer organizations. In the South African wool partnership, for example, the major difficulty did not lie in producing collective goods, such as a wool shed, but in creating internal rules and regulations focusing on transparency in the recording, sorting and grading of woolclip. Also other partnerships have encountered difficulties in their cooperation with producer organizations, which were mostly due to the lack of human, material and financial resources of producer organizations and the challenge of turning them into viable social businesses.

9. Conclusion

This paper contributes to the knowledge base on partnerships for smallholder inclusion by constructing a more integrative theory of partnerships based on the intersection of input-oriented and output-oriented partnership elements. Typology is constructed as a means to come to a better understanding and theorizing concerning the effectiveness and impacts of partnership initiatives.

As the literature review in the beginning of the paper revealed, current typologies of partnerships are mostly input-oriented, emphasizing the degree of collaboration among actors, while output-oriented aspects, including the functions of partnerships, are explained only on a rudimentary level. This paper argues that progress can be made by focusing on what is common in partnership initiatives, namely the construction of institutions that enable smallholders to participate in value chains. Smallholder farmers in developing countries face various institutional constraints that hinder them taking advantage of market opportunities; thus, partnerships serve as new institutional arrangements that can (potentially) close the gap between local practices/institutions and institutions required for participation in value chains.

In the following, we have established a link between the degree of institutional complexity of smallholder inclusion and more generic ways to categorize partnerships, for which we have here used the degree of actor engagement. It appears that the degree of institutional complexity in terms of the number of institutional domains and the complexity within these domains, which partnerships address, directly correlates to the degree of actor engagement. In other words, the higher the institutional complexity faced by partnerships, the higher the degree of engagement within partnerships. On the flipside, it seems that less complex cases with low levels of engagement are on average much larger (measured in terms of outreach, i.e. number of smallholders) than cases where the degree of institutional complexity is high and levels of engagement are also high.

While these insights deliver new knowledge on partnerships, the authors recognize that the methodological challenges of this paper need to be dealt with. These include the domains of construction of new institutions, the indicators used to define challenges and the notion of institutional complexity, which in this current version has a double meaning. Ultimately, this should substantiate our contribution in terms of connecting differences in input-related aspects of partnerships, such as the degree of engagement of partnership members or their individual roles, to output-related issues of institution building and the complexity thereof within different institutional domains.

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