Article

The Missing Ingredient for Successful Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Cooperative Capacity

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Abstract: Multi-stakeholder partnerships are an essential vehicle for solving complex societal problems. Agreements governing these partnerships often lack equitable partner agency in framing and enforcing multi-stakeholder agreements. This challenges the partner cooperation needed of partnerships to be effective. This theoretical paper introduces a new original model to measure and develop the cooperative capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships so that future agreements involving the partnership are framed to share governance equitably among all partners and hence, increase partnership performance and effectiveness. The model provides a methodology to measure and develop the cooperative capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships through key performance indicators that identify the cooperative state of partners and predicts partnership effectiveness in achieving common goals. The paper traces the theoretical genesis of the model, presents a comprehensive explanation of the model, and provides cases of the model's application.

Keywords: multi-stakeholder partnerships; partnership evaluation; partnership efficiency; partnership effectiveness; partnership assessment; cooperative capacity; performance indicators; wicked problems; Sustainable Development Goal 17

1. Introduction

The human species today faces existential threats from both people and the environment. The world is currently plagued by a multitude of complex problems across different development sectors. Complex problems are societal problems that cannot be easily solved without cooperation between multiple people, institutions, or stakeholders. They are often referred to as wicked problems in the literature. According to Rittel and Webber (1973) [1], wicked problems are societal problems that are characterized by (1) the lack of a definitive way to formulate the problem, (2) the lack of finality in a potential solution, (3) the lack of a correct solution, (4) the lack of ways to test solutions, (5) the lack of room for error, (6) the lack of a finite number of solutions that follow a well-described set of operations, (7) the lack of transferability of a solution to other similar problems, (8) every problem being symptomatic of another problem, (9) the multiplicity of causes for the problem, and (10) the liability of solutions for unintended negative consequences.

Problems in international development such as refugee challenges, mass unemployment, weak infrastructure, food shortages, and COVID-19 are all examples of complex problems. These and other complex problems in international development are characterized by the dynamics between multiple factors causing the problem and the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Solving complex problems, therefore, necessitates partnerships between stakeholders of the specific context across development sectors, geographical boundaries, and function in society.

Partnerships and cooperation are intrinsic to international development. The development community recognizes that strong partnerships and cooperation are necessary for solving wicked problems and achieving development goals. Almost every effort by the international development community involves, whether recognized or not, a web of

internal and external relationships between internal teams, outside agents, and national actors. The quality of these relationships affects every aspect of a development project, including risk, performance, sustainability, scalability, and impact.

Developing high performing partnerships is integral to the success of development projects. Partnerships may be formed between any combination of local government, private sector businesses, international NGOs, foreign government agencies, leaders of violent groups, and other key stakeholders. Traditionally, the agreements framed by multi-stakeholder partnerships to carry out development projects are governed by a dominant partner that provides the largest share of funding. The dominant partner controls decision making in addition to establishing and enforcing sanctions to ensure compliance to the agreement. Most often, a "very important" enforcement tool is the threat of withdrawal of funding. The subordinate partners are involved in the implementation of projects but lack significant "voice" and agency and have little if any influence on decision-making. This lack of "voice" and agency in the governance of partnerships is a common cause of partnership failure to achieve common goals (Franke et al., 2021) [2]. The solution of complex societal problems demands the utilization of multi-stakeholder partnerships characterized by high levels of cooperation. However, the field of international development lacks tools to measure the capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships to cooperate and predict partnership performance.

Cooperative capacity is defined as the ability of partners in a partnership to work collaboratively to achieve partnership goals. The description of cooperative capacity of partnerships is organized by nine elements: group identity and understanding of purpose, minimal recognition by stakeholders, self-management, proportional equivalence between costs and benefits, fair and inclusive decision-making, monitoring behaviors and performance, graduated sanctions, fast and fair conflict resolution, and the ability to adapt. These nine elements reflect three precursor conditions: inclusion, common understanding, and trust for effective partnerships that are advanced by Franke et al. (2021) [2]. Inclusion refers to equitably shared governance roles and agency in decision-making for all partners within the partnership. Common understanding refers to a universally shared interpretation among all the partners of the roles, practices, and processes in the governance of the partnership. Trust refers to partners' belief in each other's words, actions, and decisions regarding the partnership.

This paper presents a new model for measuring the cooperative capacity of partnerships—the Cooperative Capacity Framework (CCF). More comprehensively, the paper describes the fundamental components of the model, the Cooperative Capacity Ladder, the Partnership Maturity Matrix, and the Partnership Network Map. This original model is derived out of the dissertation work of E. Wolterstorff [3] several subsequent years of developing the model with M. Chapman and F. Page, and the application of the framework to two international partnerships. The paper concludes with applications of the Cooperative Capacity Framework, implications of the new model and suggestions for future research. The model provides a tool for measuring and developing the cooperative capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships. It informs partnerships about institutional weaknesses impeding the development of shared governance and shared agency in multi-stakeholder agreements. It also provides guidance for developing the practices and processes needed to build truly collaborative, adaptable, learning partnerships that perform at levels higher than the norm.

The following section highlights the need for the model by identifying gaps in the literature on the practice of using partnerships and their evaluation in international development and business.

2. Review of the Literature

The practice of international development has long used partnerships to design and implement interventions addressing complex problems. Multi-stakeholder partnerships in international development are now recognized as so fundamental that the United Na-

tions has taken significant steps to promote multi-stakeholder partnerships. The United Nations' Division of Sustainable Development Goals framed "strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development" as Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals [4]. The Division also created the Partnerships for SDGs online platform as well as a knowledge platform as resources for multi-stakeholder partnership practitioners to work together. While the online platform "facilitates the sharing knowledge and expertise among multi-stakeholder SDG-related partnerships and voluntary commitments, and for providing periodic updates on their progress" [5], the Knowledge Platform provides "wide access to information and knowledge for sustainable development" [6]. A review of the literature on partnership evaluations in international development and business can generally be divided into two primary areas of focus. The first involves the evaluation of partnerships. The second involves the conditions necessary and strategies for forming successful partnerships.

Partnership effectiveness is the extent to which partnerships achieve their intended outcomes. The investigation of partnership effectiveness in achieving outcomes forms the major component of the literature. Bäckstrand (2006) [7] evaluated the World Summit on Sustainable Development partnerships in terms of its effectiveness in achieving results-based governance and result-oriented policymaking. The evaluation revealed that the partnerships' effectiveness could be improved by "clearer linkage to existing institutions and multilateral agreements, measurable targets and timetables, more effective leadership, improved accountability mechanisms, more systematic review, reporting and monitoring". Lubell and Leach (2005) [8] examined watershed partnerships to identify factors affecting the partnership. The study found perceived fairness; access to quality, objective scientific knowledge; aspects of social capital: trust, norms of reciprocity and social networks; neutral facilitators; financial resources; and intensiveness of deliberation to affect partnerships. A study by Hasnain-Wynia et al. (2003) [9] analyzed community care network members' perceptions of their partnership's leadership, conflict management, decision-making dynamics, and the breadth and depth of partnership membership. The study showed (a) a negative and highly significant relation between perceptions of effectiveness and the perception that the partnership membership was "sufficiently broad to accomplish objectives", (b) positive relationship between perceptions about "leadership being ethical" and perceptions of effectiveness, and (c) negative relationship between perceptions that the leadership was not effective in keeping the group focused and perceived effectiveness". MacDonald et al. (2019) [10] investigated predictors of partner capital outcomes and their relation to partner strategic capabilities for value capture. The study revealed that product stewardship was associated with financial and organization capital, marketing and promotion was associated with human capital, and internal implementation structures was associated with shared capital. Jansen and Kalas (2020) [11] advance the addition of deliberative capacity to existing frameworks for examining multi-stakeholder partnerships. The authors posit that the use of deliberative capacity improves the effectiveness of partnerships by promoting multi-stakeholder transformative governance. Brinkerhoff (2002) [12] provides strategies to improve the effectiveness of partnerships through recommendations for considering environmental opportunities and constraints, choosing partners, and managing partnerships to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Caron et al. (2015) [13] assessed partners' perceptions of partnership effectiveness and the evaluation techniques employed by them. The study also investigated the partnership's characteristics and the partners' perceptions of the gains and implementation difficulties for individual partners. The study provided suggestions to advance the development, functioning, and effectiveness of academic–community partnerships to address public health concerns. Recommendations included clearer understanding for expectations and governance of a multi-stakeholder partnership; implementation of community-based participatory research principles (CBPR): open communication, trust, and mutual respect for the knowledge, expertise, and resources of all partners at the time of partnership formation; and early training and practice of CBPR principles.

An analysis of the effectiveness of transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development by Szulecki et al. (2011) [14] found that the more critical factor in explaining the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships was the level of institutionalization in the form of formal organization over the power of partners and the type of organization. Those partnerships studied that were not institutionalized with an independent management body suffered from unclear structure and very low performance. Sanderink and Nasiritousi (2020) [15] examined how institutional interaction of partners impacts effectiveness in the field of renewable energy. The study found that partners' institutional interactions and, more so, the exchange of information and transfer of ideas leads to increased accuracy and efficiency of regulations, research and project activities advanced the effectiveness of partnerships more than the intersection of commitments, norms, and principles among the partners. An investigation by Austin et al. (2018) [16] of the politics and practicalities of measuring the effectiveness of Indigenous conservation partnerships presented ways in which partnerships between indigenous groups and institutional investors can cooperate to define appropriate criteria to secure conservation outcomes that are effective. The suggestions included the development of new definitions that are agreed upon by the Indigenous groups and investors, acceptance that Indigenous-conservation alliances are complex, frequent reflection by collaborative means, and the negotiation of indicators to be used to assess effectiveness. Pattberg and Widerberg (2014) [17] examined the literature to analyze evidence-based assessment of the performance of multi-stakeholder partnerships and identified leadership, partners, goal setting, funding, management, monitoring, meta-governance, problem structure and sociopolitical context as factors that enhance multi-stakeholder partnership effectiveness.

Thus, there appear to be some common themes in the literature that identify conditions necessary for, and factors influencing, the effectiveness of partnerships. Studies focus on different aspects of these themes looking at factors such as goal setting, institutional structuring, transparency, inclusion, management, monitoring and evaluation and communication within the partnership.

Partnership efficiency refers to the functioning of partnerships in the most optimal way, with the focus being on processes related to the functioning of the partnership. Partnership efficiency has been examined by several experts who have suggested ways to improve efficiency. Dodds (2015) [18], for example, analyzed multi-stakeholder partnerships under the United Nations umbrella and proposed (a) a set of elements to be examined when assessing partnerships and (b) a set of criteria for reviewing multi-stakeholder partnerships for the future conduct of United Nations-related partnerships. These guidelines are useful for partnerships beyond the United Nations ambit. Caplan and Jones (2002) [19], in their practitioner note series, analyze the use of partnership approach in their Building Partnerships for Development projects. They advance that the relationship among partners can be strengthened by indicators appropriately customized to the needs of the partnership project, which work to increase clarity and reinforce communication channels among partners. Caplan et al. (2007) [20] also further provide guidance on evaluating partnerships by monitoring partnership progress and deliberating various elements within the process.

Strausz (1999) [21] analyzed sequential partnerships in contexts where partners' source information about the actions taken by previous partners that cannot be verified and developed a budget-balanced sharing rule that promotes production efficiency. Miller (1997) [22] examined the efficiency of partnerships where one partner can observe and report on the partnership actions of other partners who do not have the same privilege. In such a partnership according to Miller, efficiency can be sustained by a sharing rule that exhibits budget balance and limited liability. Liu et al. (2016) [23] investigated public–private partnership tendering processes in Australia and China to identify the factors that affect it. The study found that while the adequacy of project pipelines was the most important factor in Australia, the extent to which public officials and leadership were engaged was the most important in China. Clarity and responsiveness of governance structures were among the three most important in both countries. This finding clearly

demonstrates how the institutions of each partner can influence the partnership. Trynov (2016) [24] formulated that the applicability of public–private partnerships to projects can be enhanced by the inclusion of multiplicative economic effects leading to improved efficiency in employing budgetary resources. Trynov proposed a methodological approach and methods of evaluating the economic efficiency of public–private partnership projects.

The literature identifies factors that affect partnership efficiency but have not built them into a practical framework or model that gives a measure of partnership efficiency. The ability to predict the efficiency of a partnership is important for partners to make informed decisions about the nature and structure of partnerships.

The second and a smaller area of focus in the literature is the development of models and strategies for creating partnerships in various sectors. Brouwer et al. (2016) [25] developed a guide for designing and facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP). The guide described the stages that direct the design of MSP processes, the principles that help make MSPs effective, central conceptions that enable MSPs, and tools that facilitate collaboration. Stibbe et al. (2018) [26] also designed a guidebook describing types of cross-sector partnerships, how collaborative action by partnerships promotes value creation, and the actions that partnerships can undertake using specific tools to manage partnerships. Bezanson and Isenman (2012) [27] examined 11 consortiums and found that 10 of them experience poor governance, often due to their desire to be extremely inclusive, resulting in a failure to agree on vision and mission, and many partners working to advance their own agendas. In each of these 10 cases, outside evaluations recommended restrategizing and restructuring the consortiums. They concluded that some of the requirements for such a partnership consortium to work included the establishment of attainable objectives; M&E systems; transparency in decision-making and performance reporting; clear systems of accountability; culture of commitment, collaboration learning, accepting responsibility; published annual performance targets for boards; collective and individual objectives and work plans and 360-degree annual appraisals; and periodic external and independent reviews of governance. A review of the literature on partnerships by Horton et al. (2009) [28] revealed areas for further investigation at the "level of individual partnerships, the level of the organization that manages a portfolio of partnership, and the level of the research for development domain, where constellations of partnerships are found". Of particular interest is the finding that "the factors that influence the performance of different types of partnerships in different contexts" are not sufficiently investigated.

Other authors have looked at the importance of relationships for multi-stakeholder partnership performance. The ability of multi-stakeholder partnerships to effectively address complex problems depends on the capacity of the partners to cooperate around a shared purpose, be transparent, and share decision making—in other words, share the governance of the partnership (Franke et al., 2021) [2]. These three elements act as precursor conditions for the success of multi-stakeholder partnerships and require the development of relationships. Overton and Storey (2004) [29] posit that relationship building is a "means of improving the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of aid delivery". Atouba and Shumate (2020) [30] examine the influence of partner selection on the effectiveness of partnerships and how this relationship is impacted by trust and communication between the partners. Atouba found that "trust and communicative effectiveness fully mediated the effects of prior experience and reputation on partnership effectiveness and communication". Sloan and Oliver (2013) [31] investigated multi-stakeholder partnerships to understand the relation between trust-building and emotionality. They found that processes within partnerships are affected by emotional incidents that may change the course of building trust.

Finally, the work of Wilson et al. (2013) [32], based on the Nobel prize winning work of Elinor Ostrom, describes eight design principles that enable common pool resources groups to effectively partner and manage their shared resources. This work can be applied to "most human groups whose members must cooperate to achieve shared goals" in almost any field

facing wicked problems, including education, urban governance, and business. The eight principles listed are Wilson's elements that serve as conditions for effective partnerships.

(1) Clearly defined boundaries. The identity of the group and the boundaries of the shared resource are clearly delineated.

(2) Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs. Members of the group must negotiate a system that rewards members for their contributions. High status or other disproportionate benefits must be earned. Unfair inequality poisons collective efforts.

(3) Collective-choice arrangements. Group members must be able to create at least some of their own rules and make their own decisions by consensus. People hate being told what to do but will work hard for group goals that they have agreed upon.

(4) Monitoring. Managing a "commons" is inherently vulnerable to free-riding and active exploitation. Unless these undermining strategies can be detected at relatively low cost by norm-abiding members of the group, the tragedy of the commons will occur.

(5) Graduated sanctions. Transgressions need not require heavy-handed punishment, at least initially. Often gossip or a gentle reminder is sufficient, but more severe forms of punishment must also be waiting in the wings for use when necessary.

(6) Conflict resolution mechanisms. It must be possible to resolve conflicts quickly and in ways that are perceived as fair by members of the group.

(7) Minimal recognition of rights to organize. Groups must have the authority to conduct their own affairs. Externally imposed rules are unlikely to be adapted to local circumstances and violate principle 3.

(8) For groups that are part of larger social systems, there must be appropriate coordination among relevant groups. Every sphere of activity has an optimal scale. Large scale governance requires finding the optimal scale for each sphere of activity and appropriately coordinating the activities, a concept called polycentric governance (McGinnis, 1999). A related concept is subsidiarity, which assigns governance tasks by default to the lowest jurisdiction, unless this is explicitly determined to be ineffective. (p. S29)

The literature on the evaluation of partnerships reveals the existence of an assortment of assessment methods and strategies to evaluate performance and build partnerships. While some evaluations investigate the achievement of goals and outcomes, others investigate the process. The literature identifies several general factors influencing effective and efficient partnerships. The commonly discussed factors include: common understanding of goals, strategies and norms for the partnership; governance structure that is inclusive in terms of leadership roles and responsibilities, and congruent with policy, political, legal, and financial systems; adaptability to complexity and promotion of co-learning; secure resources including funding, strong monitoring and evaluation processes; transparency in decision making; sharing of each partner's desires, fears, and capability; open and efficient communications; strong dispute settlement processes; cooperation for collaborative problem analysis and shared accountability; and acceptable risk and rewards balance for all partners. In other words, there is a reasonable understanding of the qualities needed for effective partnerships but there is no clear set of protocols to develop those qualities up front—when forming or turning around a partnership.

Cooperation is identified by experts as a key ingredient to the success of partnerships. Cooperative capacity can be used as a predictive indicator. The level of cooperative capacity as an indicator lends itself to predicting and building partnership performance. This provides opportunities for formative structuring and restructuring when needed. However, there is no model that connects process and outcome for the capacity of partnerships to cooperate in measurable terms. There is no consistency in which aspects of cooperation are most important. The Cooperative Capacity Framework addresses these gaps by providing a model that measures cooperative capacity and predicts partnership performance. The model forms the basis for partnership development protocols for choosing and sequencing partnership building activities that will result in increased cooperation, shared governance, and higher performance.

The remainder of this article presents a detailed description of the Cooperative Capacity Framework model for measuring the cooperative capacity of partnerships.

3. The Cooperative Capacity Framework (CCF)

The Cooperative Capacity Framework consists of three primary components: the Cooperative Capacity Ladder, the Partnership Maturity Matrix, and the Partnership Network Map. The Cooperative Capacity Ladder is a graphical representation of five cooperative states displayed in workgroups, organizations, and partnerships, called Cooperative Capacity States. The ladder graphically shows the relation between stress and cooperation, adaptability, learning and, therefore, performance. The Cooperative Capacity States are five categorizations describing management practices and processes reflecting cooperative capacity. Each state reflects a discernable level of cooperation. The Partnership Maturity Matrix describes in detail the set of characteristics (processes and practices) that make up each state. The matrix is organized using key performance indicators drawn from the work of Ostrom and Wilson. The matrix is used for both measuring the current state of a partnership and for choosing the most effective and efficient capacity building goals and activities. The Partnership Network Map is a diagrammatic representation of the entire network displaying the interconnectedness between partners and all the partnerships among the various partners. Color-coding is used to indicate the cooperative capacity state for all partners and partnerships in the system, allowing for the easy identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the system. The Cooperative Capacity Framework is operationalized through the Cooperative Capacity Assessment tool (Available on the Cooperative Capacity Partners website at https://cooperativecapacity.com/, accessed on 5 January 2020) [33].

3.1. The Cooperative Capacity Ladder: A Brief Background

The model's genesis lies in the intersection of catastrophe theory and Peter Levine's theory [34] of the autonomic nervous system's response to threat. This combination resulted in a model of human response to threat, which when applied to groups, developed into the cooperative capacity model.

In the 1960s, a French mathematician, René Thom [35], began to develop ways to model the behavior of things that suddenly ("catastrophically") change. Catastrophe theory was further developed and championed by a British mathematician, Christopher Zeeman [36], who popularized the work in the United States in the early 1970s. Both men expressed excitement about the potential of catastrophe modeling to describe certain kinds of biological and social behavior.

Psychotherapist, Peter Levine, like many others in the biological and social sciences, was inspired by Zeeman's ideas. For his dissertation in medical biophysics, Levine applied a catastrophe model to the behavior of the autonomic nervous system and its relation to stress and trauma.

Levine suggested a five-state model, in which each state is an attractor state and follows a certain kind of self-reinforcing behavior that people follow as they become aware of and respond to threats. Each state is distinct. Movements between states are not linear or continuous, but sudden, or in Thom's terminology, "catastrophic". In addition, because they are attractor states, it requires energy to move to a new state or return to a previous state.

Levine's model identified five states of human response to threat:

(1) Relaxed and Alert, with no threat apparent.
(2) Stressed, a threat is identified and requires attention.
(3) Strongly Stressed, a threat is imminent and requires immediate response.
(4) Traumatized, the threat is overwhelming and requires outside help to escape.
(5) Severely Traumatized, the threat is overwhelming and there is no hope of escape.

As described below, these five states are also reflected in group behavior. Two more aspects of this model are important. In the jump between Strongly Stressed to Traumatized,

there is a major change in autonomic nervous system behavior. In the first three stress levels, the body prepares itself by revving up for action, then acts, typically by fight or flight. With a stronger threat, when the state jumps to Traumatized, the previous revving up responses will continue, but the body will also activate another part of the nervous system, which fights against this revving up and attempts to calm and relax the body (this is the reason people may feel lethargic and unable to work in high stress situations). The change when an individual jumps between the Strong Stress State and Traumatized State is far greater than the change between any other states.

The other important aspect of the model is the not well-known concept of motility. Motility refers to the human capacity to imagine and assess possibilities and is dependent on the human physical state. Regardless of the source of what stresses an individual, part of the human response to stress is physical and this physical response limits the human ability to imagine options or solutions. Therefore, human competence and ability to cope with challenges diminishes as humans accumulate stress and move from Relaxed and Alert down the states toward Severely Traumatized.

3.2. The Five Attractor States

The concept of attractor states from self-organization theory applied to partnerships helps build another aspect of the essence of cooperative states. According to Newman (2009) [37], an attractor state is defined as a critical value, pattern, solution or outcome towards which a system settles down or approaches over time (cited in Hiver, 2015, p. 21). Figure 1 illustrates the concept of attractor states or simply "attractors" through a simple landscape made of two attractor states shown as two valleys or basins. As explicated by Dilts (1998) [38], "If one imagines that the ball shown in Figure 1 is able to move over the landscape, it is easy to visualize how the bottoms of the valleys would make a very stable location for the ball. The ridge where the ball is sitting, however, would be a very unstable location. If the ball were resting at the bottom of one of these valleys, it would take much more energy to move it to a new location than it would if the starting state of the ball were in the unstable location." The key to the usefulness of both Levine's model on response to threat and the cooperative capacity model is that the five states are attractor states.
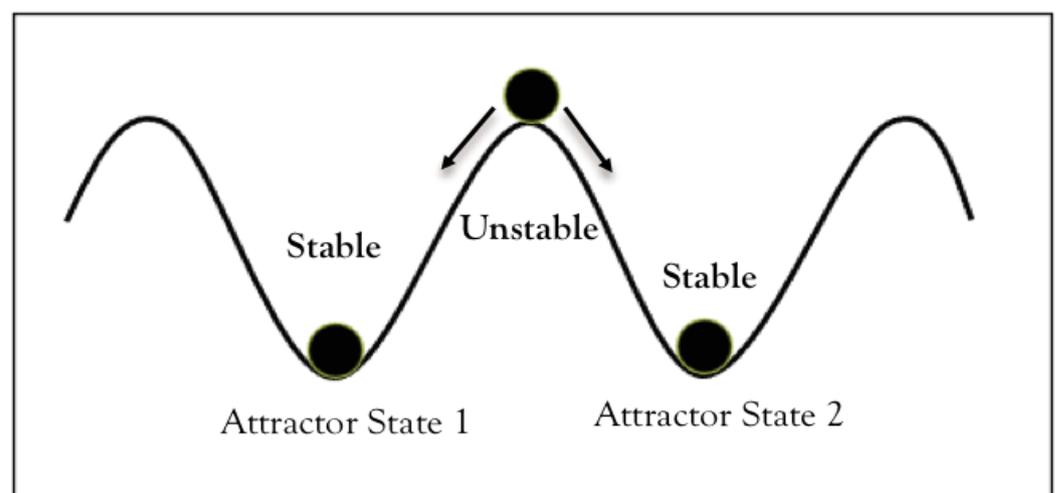
Figure 1. Attractor "landscape" adapted from Dilts (1998) [38].

In partnership systems, there are five cooperative states that act as attractor states. The advantages of cooperative states are that they can be described, measured, and mapped. The sections below build a ladder of cooperative states relating the practices and processes for each state with its level of stress, cooperative capacity, and adaptability and learning. As these cooperative states are measurable, this model is testable unlike other models of partnership performance.

Applying the concept of attractor states to groups, E. Wolterstorff and M. Chapman described the characteristics of five attractor or cooperative states that partners and partnerships fall into. Each state is a self-reinforcing pattern of organizational and partnership management processes and practices that result in measurable differences in performance. Each cooperative capacity state is named and described below:

The Integrated State is when the partnership has:

- A strong group identity that prioritizes the vision, mission, and strategy of the whole partnership; strong recognition and support and two-way communications and collaboration with stakeholders; and formal processes for shared governance that systematically distribute information, allocate resources, and adjust the strategy and plans in response to internal and external changes in order to achieve the vision and mission.
- Shared agency through systematic and adaptable allocation of responsibilities, authority, and rewards across the partnership that are considered fair, and formal inclusive decision-making processes that consider the whole partnership and are aligned with vision, mission, and strategy.
- Monitoring and evaluation processes that measure and provide feedback on the partnership's progress on achieving impact, outcomes, and inputs; partnership-wide processes for deciding on and imposing graduated sanctions for rule breaking designed to regulate and improve partnership performance; formal systematic partnership processes for quickly and fairly resolving serious conflict; and formal systematic processes to adapt strategy and processes as needed to achieve the vision and mission.

The Aligned State is where the partnership has delegated the achievement of higher-level goals (often strategic goals or other higher-level outcomes) to clearly defined groupings that constitute "areas of responsibility" within the partnership.

Each area of responsibility has:

- A clear group identity around, and investment in, the partnership's vision, mission, and strategy; however, members' viewpoints and priorities are limited to the goals of their own areas of responsibilities. These areas of responsibilities have support from and two-way communications and collaboration with stakeholders. Within each area of responsibility, there are formal processes for systematically distributing information, and adjusting plans in response to internal and external changes in order to achieve the goals of the area of responsibility.
- Systematic and adaptable allocation of responsibilities, authority, and rewards within the areas of responsibility that are considered fair. Each area of responsibility has inclusive formal decision-making processes that consider the goals of the area of responsibility, but still are aligned with greater partnership vision, mission, and strategy.
- Monitoring and evaluation processes that measure and provide feedback on the area of responsibility's progress on achieving its goals; each area of responsibility has systematic processes for (a) deciding on and imposing graduated sanctions for rule breaking designed to regulate and improve performance and (b) for quickly and fairly resolving serious conflict within the area of responsibility; and (c) formal systematic processes to adapt plans as needed to achieve its goals.

The Inclusive State is where all the members of the partnership have invested in the vision, mission, and strategy of the partnership, but the systems and processes needed to focus the work are not in place and members tend to take on too much responsibility for achieving the vision and mission. The members of the partnership have:

- A clear group identity as part of the partnership with all members committed to the vision, mission, and strategy. Stakeholders recognize and somewhat support the partnership. Some higher-level results are delegated to sub-groups, but areas of responsibility are not clearly defined leading to overlap. Information is shared, and feedback is solicited from stakeholders. Members work to share information, adapt resource allocation, and adjust plans and strategies, but the processes necessary to do this systematically are not in place, leading to haphazard execution and frustration.

- Informal opportunities to negotiate the costs and benefits of the partnership for each partner, which may or may not lead to all partners perceiving these to be fair. The dominant partners are committed to fair and inclusive decision-making and delegate decision-making down the chain of command, but are unable to fully implement this delegation due to lack of processes and, often, skills.
- A monitoring and evaluation system that can track outputs and some outcomes but does not yet have clearly defined metrics for strategic goals. Due to a commitment to two-way communication and delegation, there are goodwill, but nonsystematic efforts to (a) decide on and impose graduated sanctions for rule breaking in order to regulate and improve performance; (b) to quickly and fairly resolve serious conflict; and (c) to adapt plans and processes as needed to achieve its goals.

The Top-down State is where the partnership relies on one dominant partner to:

- Define the partnership's identity by setting and holding the vision, mission, and strategy; interact with stakeholders (who recognize, but are generally dissatisfied with the partnership); distribute information to the other partners; set and enforce (often rigid) processes and protocols; and make and adjust plans and strategies. The non-dominant partners are obedient to the dictates of the dominant partner.
- Distribute the costs and benefits of the partnership among the members and make all key partnership decisions.
- Monitor the outputs of the partnership, determine sanctions for rule breaking, resolve all conflict, and adapt to any external or internal changes.

The Fragmented State is where the partnership's systems are non-existent, ad hoc, or have totally broken down:

- The partnership is undefined with unclear boundaries. Vision and mission are weak or non-existent. There is lack of agreement on who the stakeholders are and relations with them are ad hoc. Stakeholders are highly dissatisfied in their dealings with the partnership. Processes for distributing information, allocating resources, and plans do not exist or are not followed. Members make decisions and take actions based on their own interests and thus, end up working at cross purposes.
- Allocation of responsibilities, authority, and rewards across the partnership depend on improvised, on-going negotiations among members. Decisions are made in an ad hoc manner and formal decision-making processes either do not exist or are not used.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems are not in place or are not used; information on activities is held by individual members and not systemically shared. There are no set criteria nor processes for deciding on sanctions, which are applied inconsistently, if at all, nor are there processes for resolving conflict, which therefore tend to remain unresolved. Changes that impact the partnership are made on an ad hoc basis and members may sometimes not be included in the decision making or informed about the decision.

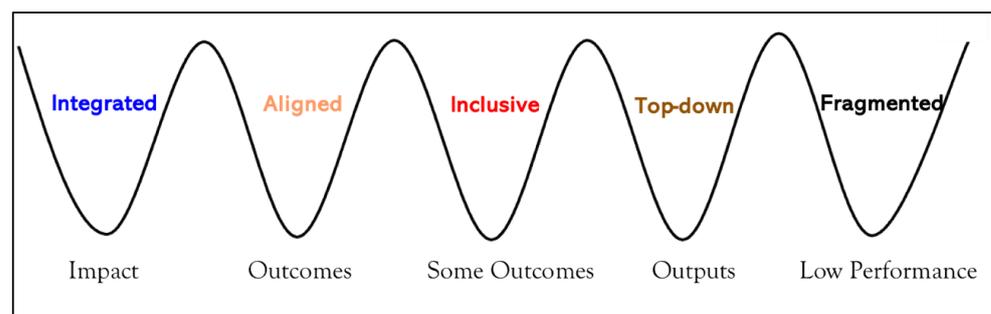Figure 2 below shows a simple illustration of the landscape for the five cooperative attractor states.

Figure 2. Simple attractor landscape for the Cooperative Capacity States with associated results.

The cooperative capacity state of partners and partnerships in each state determines the ability of the partnerships to cooperate. Starting with the most collaborative state, the management practices and processes of partners in the Integrated state support the highest level of cooperation, with all partnership members fully committed to the vision and mission, sharing governance and agency, and implementing other characteristics of effective and efficient partnerships.

Each subsequent cooperative capacity state listed above is less cooperative than the preceding state. The partnership systems of the Aligned state are based on well defined, high performing areas of responsibility (often called silos) that have difficulty coordinating to optimize overall partnership performance. The partnership systems of the Inclusive state do not have the clearly defined areas of responsibility and the associated processes of the Aligned state, resulting in the cooperation to achieve the vision and mission becoming disorganized as each member takes on (often too much) responsibility without boundaries to what other members are doing. As will be described in more detail below, the systems in the Top-down state devolve to relying on a dominant partner or rigid, inflexible set of protocols; members of the partnership no longer own the vision and mission nor share agency. Finally, the Fragmented state loses the systematic ability to organize and cooperate. Decisions and actions are made on an ad hoc basis and are grounded on the interest of each member, resulting in members, purposely or not, working at cross purposes.

The identification of these five states enables us to build a map to be used when working to diagnose and build the cooperation and performance of partnerships. The following sections describe a two-dimensional graphical representation of the five states that relates stress to cooperation, and ultimately, performance. Table 1 summarizes the differences between the five cooperative capacity states.

Table 1. Summary of differences between the five cooperative capacity states.

| Fragmented *	Top-Down	Inclusive	Aligned	Integrated
No clear vision or mission with weak leadership	A dominant partner holds vision, mission, and maybe strategy	All partners are invested in vision, mission, and strategy	All partners are invested in vision, mission, strategy, and their own workplans	All partners are invested in vision, mission, strategy, and share workplans
Ad hoc ways of working together according to self-interests and practices of each partner	Partners follow dominant partner's directives, typically without opportunity to give feedback	All partners work in a haphazard fashion toward achieving vision, mission, and strategy, and share feedback	Higher-level goals are delegated to areas of responsibility. Each area performs well but coordination among areas is difficult.	Processes are in place to automatically share resources across the partnership to maximize performance
Only ad hoc or individual accountability to one or more individual leaders or stakeholders	Dominant partner holds partners accountable for outputs	All partners begin to hold each other accountable for outputs and some outcomes	Each area of responsibility is accountable for achieving their own outcome metrics	All partners hold each other accountable for optimizing the partnership's outcomes and impact

* Each state is color coded for easy identification.

3.3. The Y Axis: The Five Cooperative Capacity States along Stress

As stress increases, work groups, organizations, and partnerships will move into lower states. Moreover, as with Levine's five-state model where there is a significant change between Strong Stress and Traumatized, there is a similar significant change between Inclusive and Top-down. A key characteristic of the top three cooperative states, Integrated, Aligned, and Inclusive, is that all the members of an organization or partnership have invested in the vision, mission, and strategy, and share governance. They have agency over their own actions and use the vision, mission, and strategy to guide their decision making and activities. These three states are called Collaborative States.

In the next two lower states, this group connection to the vision, mission, and strategy, and the agency they provide is lost. In Top-down, only leadership or a dominant partner has invested in, or owns the vision, mission, and strategy. There is no shared governance in Top-down (at best, the leader is a benign dictator); authority and decision making are vested in the leader or dominant partner and not shared. The rest of the group is dissociated from the vision, mission, and strategy, not given agency, and is tasked to be obedient and follow directions and protocols, with little or no regard whether those directions and protocols contribute to achieving the vision, mission, or strategy.

In the Fragmented State, this dissociation is even greater as there is no clear vision or mission, thus no recognized authority or distribution of agency. Individual members take actions based on their own informal power and interests. These two lower states are called Detached States. This change is shown in a three-dimensional illustration in Figure 3. The green trapezoids represent the underlying level of a partnership's investment in the vision and mission.
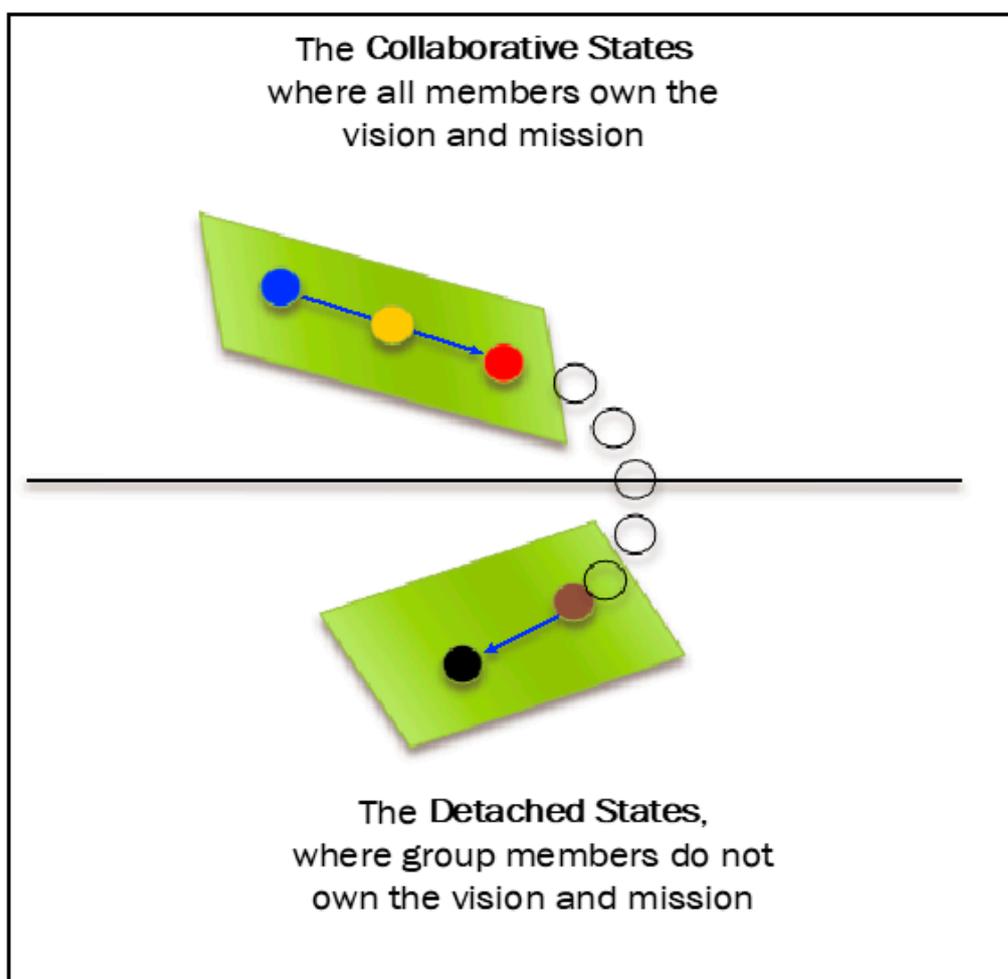
Figure 3. Three-dimensional representation of the fundamental change from collaborative to detached.

On the upper trapezoid, the group remains invested in the vision and mission, and that group ownership of the vision and mission underpins the three highest cooperative capacity states. However, there is a fundamental shift when the members of the partnership dissociate from the vision and mission; then, the partnership "falls" off the higher trapezoid to the lower trapezoid (the empty black balls), where this detachment from the vision and mission and absence of shared governance underpins the lowest two cooperative capacity states.

When we map this three-dimensional model onto two dimensions, the lower right quadrant in the resulting map (Figure 4 below) becomes empty, representing the gap between the Collaborative States and the Detached states.
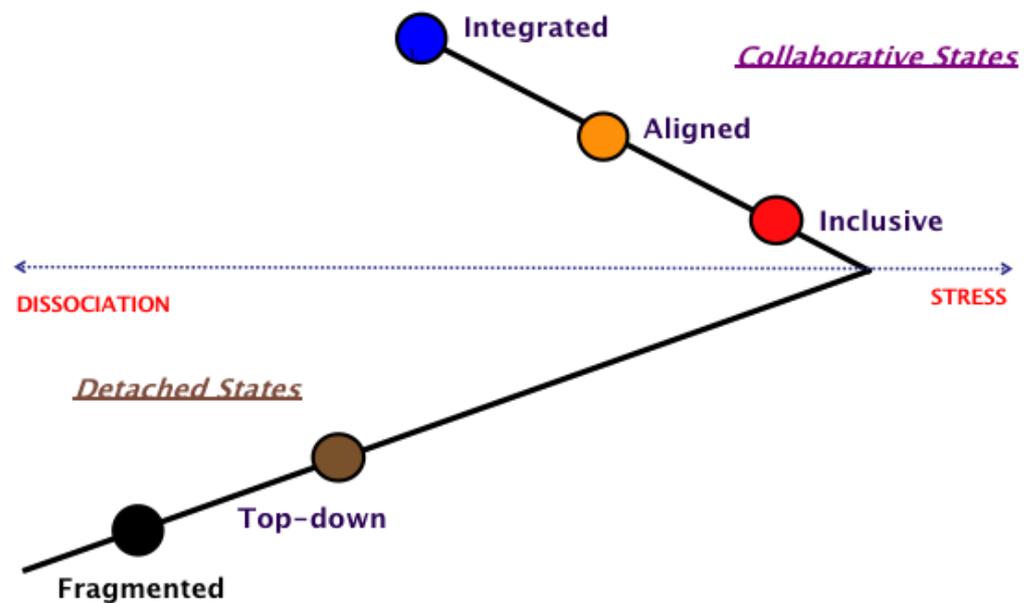

Figure 4. Two-dimensional representation of the fundamental change from collaborative to detached.

3.4. The X Axis: Adaptability and Learning along the Cooperative Capacity Ladder

The other characteristics for each of the states is that they determine the ability of a partnership to read its environment, communicate important information to where it is needed in the partnership, identify and assess possibilities, and co-learn with partners. Each state has its own unique capacity in each of these areas. This aspect of the states is comparable to "motility", the capacity to identify and assess possibilities in humans; however, there is no similar defined term like "motility" for the same capacity in groups, organizations, and partnerships. The best equivalent terms appear to be adaptability or learning. As described above, motility is highest when humans are relaxed and alert and lowest when strongly stressed. The same is true for partnerships. Their adaptability and ability to learn are highest in the Integrated state and lowest in the Fragmented state.

Therefore, the map of the five cooperative capacity states is completed by adding a scale representing adaptability and learning. In the cooperative capacity model, that scale has been defined to range from Fragmented, the low ability to adapt and learn, to Integrated, the high ability to adapt and learn. The zero point of this scale is the break line between the collaborative states and the detached states. When added to Figure 3 above, this scale completes the graphic named "the Cooperative Capacity Ladder" as shown in Figure 5.
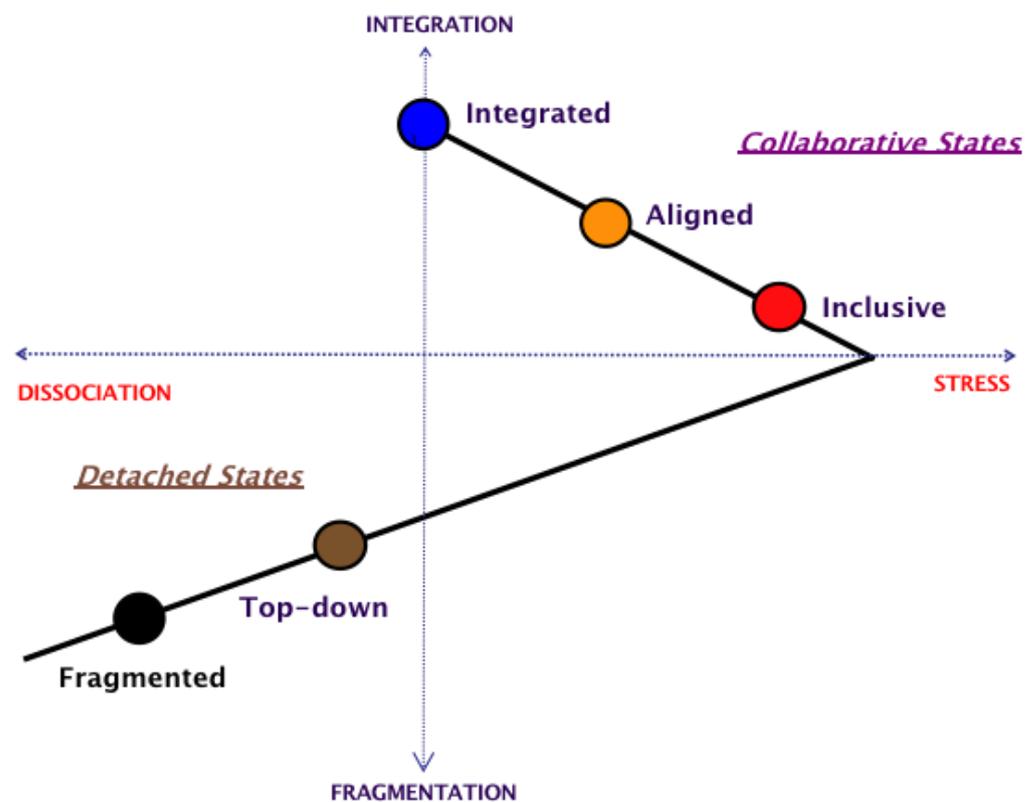
Figure 5. The y-axis: cooperative capacity, dissociation, and stress.

3.5. Adaptability and Learning Relationship with Performance

A basic tenet of the organizational and partnership literature is that there is a strong relationship among cooperation, shared governance and agency, adaptability, learning, and performance. Higher effectiveness and efficiency were found in partnerships that shared common goals, inclusive governance and leadership, adaptability, flexibility, co-learning, secure resources (notable for reducing organizational stress), open communications, and transparency. Each of these qualities is characteristic of more cooperative systems. The literature review also revealed the example of a poorly performing partnership that aligned with the Fragmented State. Anecdotal evidence in the literature and Cooperative Capacity Partners' experience posit a relation between the cooperative capacity states and levels of performance.

The highest expected performance for any partnership would be from a partnership in the Integrated State. Given such a partnership's ability to communicate transparently, share resources, and share agency to adapt, learn and optimize vision and mission achievement, it can be expected by such partnerships, from the theory and recommendations in the literature, to achieve their outputs, outcomes, and impact.

Partnerships in the Aligned State would be expected to achieve the next highest level of performance. Due to the shared governance and integration and high performance within each of its areas of responsibility and clear measurements of strategic goals and objectives, an Aligned partnership would be expected to achieve outputs, outcomes, and some impact. An Aligned partnership cannot achieve the same levels of performance and impact as an integrated partnership due to the difficulty it faces in coordination among and between the areas of responsibility.

Partnerships in the Inclusive State would be expected to achieve outputs and some outcomes. It has varying levels of the characteristics of Integrated—the partners do share governance, but with some level of power asymmetry; communication among partners is somewhat transparent; resources are imperfectly shared; agency is imperfectly shared; its performance is held back by underdeveloped processes and lack of measurable strategic

goals. Nevertheless, Inclusive partnerships are adaptable enough to make some adjustments to ensure that their outputs build to intended outcomes.

As the models in the literature on partnership performance are not built around the concept of attractor states, the Aligned and Inclusive states are hard to identify in the literature. Researchers tend to focus on the individual best practices of partnership management rather than looking for stable patterns displayed by an interconnected set of elements (an attractor state) that generates a level of performance. Therefore, when the best practices of the individual elements are combined, the resulting "systems" in the literature tend to describe the Integrated State. This approach discounts practices of the partnership management that are not yet fully optimized and whose suboptimization determine the intermediate states of Aligned and Inclusive, thereby missing those collaborative attractor states.

A partnership in the Top-down state will be very efficient in achieving outputs in line with plans, contracts, and core processes. Top-down partnerships are directed by one dominant partner that determines the vision, mission, and strategy, controls decision making, and establishes and enforces compliance to set processes and contractual obligations. Top-down partnerships do not promote transparency nor share agency among the partners. Their reliance on a dominant partner and rigid processes limits them from being adaptable or applying the learnings necessary to achieve outcomes and impacts. This limit may be overcome temporarily by a genius leader in the dominant partner, who has the ability to determine and make the appropriate adjustments. However, this ability is never institutionalized and is lost when the leader leaves the partnership. Ultimately, partnerships in the Top-down state are rigid and inflexible, lack equitable partner agency and are relatively low performing, unable to consistently achieve outcomes or impact.

This difference between the collaborative states and the Top-down state, is clear enough to be recognized in practice and the literature. The traditional agreements for partnerships in international development, as described in the introduction, create partnerships in the Top-down State. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), Accra Agenda for Action (2008) [39], as well as contained in most of the studies reviewed for this paper, are efforts to move international partnerships out of Top-down into the more collaborative states.

Finally, partnerships in the Fragmented State generally fail at achieving any meaningful outputs, let alone outcomes and impact. The performance of fragmented partnerships is sabotaged by its members' pursuit of their own interests and their working at cross purposes.

The experience of E. Wolterstorff, M. Chapman, and F. Page in working with partnerships and an examination of the partnership literature indicate that partner and partnership performance can improve substantially on any of the key performance indicators when they move up one state. Examples of this are provided below in the cases, but further research into the relation between the cooperative states and performance is required.

3.6. Summary of the Cooperative Capacity Ladder

Based on the map and the relations between the states and x-axis variables discussed above, Table 2 below shows each state's core characteristics, ability to learn and adapt, and expected level of performance based on achieving outputs and outcomes.

Table 2. Summary of x-axis and relationship with performance of the Cooperative Capacity Ladder.

State	Partnership Characteristics	Level of Collaboration or Detachment	Adaptability and Learning	Performance
Integrated	Shared governance, adaptable and highly responsive	All Members committed with shared agency	Very High	Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact—will perform at highest level in competitive environment
Aligned	Shared governance constricted by difficulty in coordinating between highly effective "areas of responsibility"	All Members committed with shared agency	High	Outputs, Outcomes, and some Impact—will perform in competitive environments
Inclusive	Underdeveloped systems and metrics but some shared governance and responsiveness	All Members committed with varying degrees of shared agency	Moderate	Outputs and some Outcomes—will struggle in competitive environment
Top-down	Dependent on leader or rigid processes	Only leader or dominant partner committed and has agency	Low	Outputs only—will fail in competitive environment
Fragmented	Members working at cross purposes	No commitment	Very Low	A few Outputs at best—failure almost assured

3.7. Core Design Principles (CDPs) to Measure Cooperative Capacity

The greatest advantage of the cooperative states model is that the cooperative capacity states are measurable as they can be described by performance indicators that are observable patterns of practices. Using these patterns, it is possible to identify each of the states for both partners and partnerships.

Using this characteristic of attractor states, E. Wolterstorff, M. Chapman, and later F. Page [40] designed a maturity matrix that describes the stable patterns for each of the cooperative state. The nine core design principles by Wilson et al. (2012) were adapted to provide the structure for the Partnership Maturity Matrix. As presented by Wilson et al., the core design principles are binary—partnerships are either applying them fully or they are not. For example, for CDP 1 (see list above), the identity of the group and the boundaries of the [partnership] are clearly delineated, or they are not. Adapting the concept of the CDPs to the cooperative capacity state model requires breaking the binary approach that makes the design principles "core" and identifying how and how well each State applies each of the design principles. This means, continuing with the example based on the delineation of boundaries, each of the five states has distinct characteristics on how and the degree to which boundaries are set and defended. Table 3 below shows how a partnership in each state delineates its boundary.

Table 3. The five cooperative capacity states' boundaries.

Fragmented	Top-Down	Inclusive	Aligned	Integrated
There are no clear boundaries for the partnership.	Partnership boundaries, both external and internal, are set and defended by a dominant partner.	External boundaries are clear and set and imposed by the members of the partnership. Internal boundaries are not well defined.	The external boundaries are clear and set and imposed by the members of the partnership. Internal boundaries are well defined by areas of responsibility. Internal boundaries are "impermeable", information and resources do not flow between them.	The external boundaries are clear and set by the members of the partnership. Internal boundaries are well defined by areas of responsibility. These internal boundaries are permeable, information and resources systemically flow between them as needed.

Therefore, the CDPs have been adapted to be more general designed principles (DPs) to provide the framework for a maturity matrix. The maturity matrix lists the observable stable patterns of practice for these nine DPs to describe each cooperative capacity state. Table 4 presents the structure of the Partnership Maturity Matrix.

Table 4. The Partnership Maturity Matrix.

Cooperative Capacity State–Design Principles	Fragmented	Top-Down	Inclusive	Aligned	Integrated
Strong group identity and understanding of purpose	Descriptions of behavior patterns	Descriptions of behavior patterns	Descriptions of behavior patterns	Descriptions of behavior patterns	Descriptions of behavior patterns
Minimal recognition by stakeholders					
Self-management					
Proportional equivalence between costs and benefits					
Fair and inclusive decision making					
Monitoring behavior and performance					
Graduated sanctions					
Fair and fast conflict resolution					
Adaptability					

By adopting the nine design principles to structure key partnership performance indicators (KPIs) for cooperative capacity, the maturity matrix is built on two theories of group and partnership performance. The nine design principles are the organizing structure, and the five cooperative capacity states are the indicators of cooperation and performance (The full maturity matrix, including descriptions of the characteristics of each element in each state can be found at https://cooperativecapacity.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CC-Maturity-Matrix-Book-Final-12-02-2020.pdf, accessed on 5 January 2020) [40]. The Maturity Matrix provides an innovative method to measure the cooperative capacity of any partnership. It provides the international development community a comprehensive approach and terminology to use in measuring and developing collaboration, learning, adaptability, and performance. Using the model will also give the international development community a clear understanding of the weaknesses in partnership governance and management that hinder multi-stakeholder agreements as well as provide a baseline from which to design improvements.

3.8. Simple Rules While Working with Cooperative States

There are a number of "simple rules" associated with the Cooperative Capacity Ladder that clarify the application of the "ladder". Three of the most relevant are described below.

Simple Rule 1: partnerships can move only one state at a time and force and effort are required to move to another state.

As each state is an attractor state, partnerships will "prefer" to stay in their current state rather than move up or down the ladder. However, if enough "force" is applied, the partnership will shift states. However, no matter how much "force" is applied, partnerships can only shift one state at a time. Returning to Figure 2 above, in the representation of the attractor state landscape, a ball representing a partnership moves between states one state at a time—the ball cannot "take off" and "fly over a state", it must first enter any state on the way to the next state.

The "force" that will cause partnerships to move to a lower state, or "down the ladder" is stress, either internal or external. Examples of external stress include changes

in the sociopolitical context of the partnership, changes in the economy such as inflation or recession, natural disasters, increased competition, or changes in funder priorities. Examples of internal stress include serious unresolved internal conflicts, poor management, failure to achieve goals, and changes in leadership and membership. When stress becomes unmanageable, the partnership will lose its current level of cohesion and move down the ladder one state at a time (as an imaginary ball rolls up and down the hills and valleys from right to left in Figure 2). Table 5 below gives a brief explanation of how a partnership's reaction to too much stress results in moving to a lower state.

Table 5. Partnership reaction to stress.

Current State	Reactions to Stress	Lower State
Integrated	When stress or a crisis becomes too extreme, each of the areas of responsibility of the partnership will react by attempting to take accountability themselves to solve the crisis. This breaks the systemic cooperation between areas of responsibility, which begin operating independently to solve the threat.	Aligned—high performing, clearly defined areas of responsibility.
Aligned	Unmanageable stress for an Aligned partnership causes the structure of the areas of responsibility to break down. All the members of the partnership work as best they can inside and outside of their previous areas of responsibility to resolve the crisis while still committed to achieving the vision, mission, and strategy. In this state, members feel the highest level of stress.	Inclusive—haphazard common effort to achieve vision, mission, and strategy.
Inclusive	If an Inclusive partnership cannot resolve the stress, members will become so stressed, frustrated, or "burnt out" that they will stop caring about the vision, mission and strategy, and turn to "just doing their jobs". No longer feeling responsible for the vision, mission, strategy (dissociation) removes much of the stress felt by the members and transfers that stress to the leader or dominant partner.	Top-down—dependent on the dominant partner with non-dominant partners being obedient to the dominant partner's directions.
Top-down	Top-down partnerships faced with unmanageable stress fragment completely when the non-dominant partners decide to no-longer follow the lead or take direction from the Dominant partner. Non-dominant partners may leave the partnership; if they do not, they use the partnership to achieve their own individual priorities.	Fragmented—members of the partnership work for their own self-interests at cross purposes with the other partners

Conversely, moving to the next higher state, or up the ladder, is caused by capacity building efforts (imagine pushing the ball from left to right in Figure 2) in the form of good management and well implemented organizational change efforts. Again, a partnership may only move up one state at a time. Table 6 below shows examples of key organizational change that will help partnerships move up the ladder. This table starts with the Fragmented state, because, by definition, all partnerships begin in the Fragmented state. It is important to note that each state serves as a foundation for the next higher state. For example, a partnership cannot move from Fragmented to Inclusive directly. Trying to create inclusiveness without the clear vision and mission, strong leadership, and established systems and processes of a top-down program will not work; without the structure created in the Top-down State, the organizational foundation needed to invite participation and ownership from all members of the partnership is absent. Similarly, a partnership cannot move from the haphazardness of the Inclusive State straight to being fully Integrated without first learning to measure results, prioritize targets, and manage their internal processes, which are the hallmarks of the Accountable State.

This property of the cooperative states to move only one state at a time and to build on each other greatly simplifies working with partnerships in crisis or building partnership capacity from the start. By identifying the current state of a partnership, partners also

automatically identify their goal for moving the partnership into the next higher state, which is to develop the set management practices of that next higher state. For this, the maturity matrix is used to establish detailed change objectives, that when accomplished methodically, will result in the partnership "jumping" into the next higher state. Attempts to develop management practices of states that are two or more states higher than the current state will be doomed to failure; at best, such attempts will be a waste of time and resources, and at worst, they will increase stress on the system and slow down or prevent the desired movement to the next higher state.

Table 6. Examples of organizational changes to move up the ladder.

Current State	Important Change to Move to the Next Higher State	Higher State
Fragmented	Define the vision, mission, and strategy for the partnership and empower one partner to implement them.	Top-down—one dominant partner directing the other, non-dominant partners.
Top-down	The dominant partner builds commitment by all partners to the vision, mission, and strategy; delegates agency to other partners for higher-level results (outcomes or impact) and asks for and accepts critical feedback from the non-dominant partners.	Inclusive—haphazard common effort to achieve vision, mission, and strategy.
Inclusive	Establish metrics for higher-level results and delegate the achievement of higher-level targets to defined "areas of responsibility"; implement process management and change systems within each area of responsibility.	Aligned—high performing, clearly defined areas of responsibility.
Aligned	Implement information systems that push and pull information from all the areas of responsibility to where it is needed and when it is needed and establish routine processes to coordinate resources and actions among the areas of responsibility to adjust and optimize strategy implementation and achievement of vision and mission.	Integrated—systematically and efficiently adapt, balance, and optimize resources across the whole partnership to best achieve its vison and mission

Simple Rule 2: A partnership can only reach the cooperative capacity state of the partner with the lowest program cooperative capacity state.

All partnerships are limited by the capacities of the partners. The partner in the lowest state will not be able to implement the practices and processes required for the partnership to be in a higher state. For example, a partner in the Top-down State will not be able to implement the bottom-up communication and shared governance and agency required in the Inclusive State. Likewise, a partner in the Inclusive State will not be able to prioritize activities and resources based on measurable metrics, a key requirement for being in the Aligned State. Unless the partner in the lowest cooperative state can move itself into a higher state, the highest state attainable by a partnership is that of the lower partner, even if the other partner functions in a higher state.

This restriction by a partners' cooperative capacity state on the maximum capacity state of the partnership is an integral part of developing a partnership improvement strategy. This simple rule requires the assessment of both partners in the partnership before committing to a partnership strengthening strategy. If the limiting factor to a partnership's cooperative capacity is the cooperative capacity of one of the partners, the most effective strategy will be to build the cooperative capacity of that partner, before building the capacity of the partnership.

A simple example of the application of this rule is a partnership with one partner in the Fragmented State. Given this simple rule, the partnership will also be in the Fragmented State. Assuming the partners want to or have to stay in the partnership, any pathway to improving the cooperative capacity of the partnership will require first moving the Fragmented partner into the Top-down state, and then the partnership into the Top-down state. If that is not possible, the partner in the higher state will have to decide if it wishes to

accept being in a Fragmented partnership and work to manage the partnership to make it the best version of the Fragmented state.

　　Simple Rule 3: Control the rate of change.

　　Finally, change increases stress, which decreases collaboration. Therefore, change efforts that introduce too many changes too fast will lead to levels of stress that will defeat the effort to build cooperative capacity. Thus, it is prudent when planning interventions to build cooperative capacity and shared governance to go slow and space out change interventions. It can take time to move a partner or partnership up to the next state but rushing the process can result not only in failure to improve, but also regression to a lower cooperative state and a decrease in partnership effectiveness.

4. The Partnership Network Map

　　A third aspect of the Cooperative Capacity Framework is its application to partnership networks. This is performed by mapping out the network of partners (shown as dark ovals in Figure 6) and the various partnerships among all the partners (shown as the light ovals and connecting lines) and color-coding their cooperative capacity. This allows managers at all levels to see strengths and weaknesses in the system that affect their ability to perform in the field, transfer capacity, and scale. Figure 6 below represents a partnership network map.
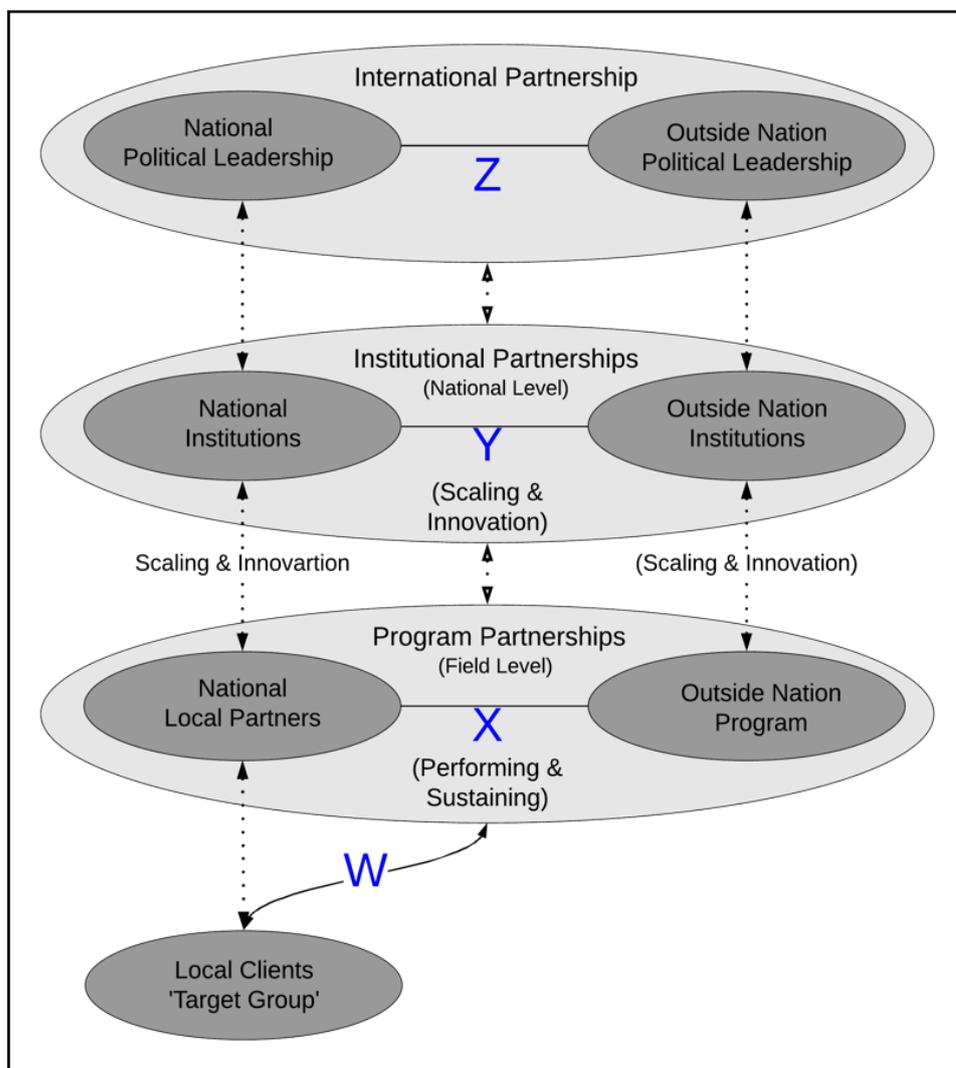

Figure 6. The Partnership Network Map.

This map is made up of three horizontal levels of partnerships. The Z partnership denotes the level of collaboration (such as allies, clients, etc.) between countries. The Y level shows the relationship between the headquarters of international agents and the host government. The X level shows the partnership between projects and their national partners. Finally, the W line shows the partnership between the X partners and those receiving the services of the project.

Vertically, each of these actors are connected in a formal or informal chain of command. On the left side is the "chain of command" for the host nation. Very often this chain of command runs from the political leadership through the ministries, provinces, and districts down to (and up from) communities. On the right side is the chain of command for the international partner. For bilateral aid, that chain starts with the political leadership of the donor country and moves through the aid agency to the implementing agents (often INGOs or consulting firms) and finally to the group receiving the services of the aid.

There are several key partnerships in this system that affect the sustainability and scalability of services, and the spread of innovation. For the sustainability of services, the partnership between a project and local agents is critical since a local agent is necessary to sustain the activities of the project. However, a local agent will only continue to implement activities supported or initiated by an outside development project if they come to feel ownership of the vision, mission, and strategy that demand the activities. This level of ownership will not develop if the partnership between local agents and outside program is in the fragmented state, or in the top-down state with the outside program as the dominant partner. Only when that partnership is in the Inclusive state or higher is it really possible for the local agent to take over the ownership of the activities.

Scalability is more of a vertical process. The lessons and innovations learned by the program implementation (levels W and X) must be transferred up to level Y. In the host country, this could be up through the government ministry. For the outside nation, it is up from the project to the national headquarters, who can then use the lessons and innovations in other areas of the country.

In addition, if innovation from an outside program is going to be scaled sustainably, there is an additional step of transferring the learning to the higher levels in a local ministry. Therefore, scalability is a multi-player dance, and works best if all the actors are in the Inclusive state or higher. If any of the actors are in Top-down or Fragmented states, they may block the flow of information and innovation either up the chain of command or across any of the partnerships. A common example of this dynamic, illustrated in Figure 7, is country missions in the Top-down state refusing to adjust contracts despite learnings by the implementers in the field.

In Figure 7, the international program and local agency partner are in an Inclusive relationship and are thus able to adapt and innovate together to a certain degree to achieve their common goals. Additionally, due to this level of collaboration where vision, mission, and strategy are shared, there is a good chance that the program's services will be adopted by the local agency and continue after the outside program closes.

However, due to the top-down relationship of both these partners with those up the chain in the nation's capital, their learning and innovation will not be spread. An important consequence of Top-down partnerships being led by a dominant partner is that critical information does not flow up to them from the non-dominant partner. Therefore, a Top-down partnership does not learn from the experience of the non-dominant partners. In the case illustrated in Figure 7, the top-down relationships between the nation's capital and the program partners means that the learnings and innovation of the program will not be scaled up to higher levels or other regions.

The two cases presented below attempt to illustrate the impacts of the Cooperative Capacity Framework during its early development phase.
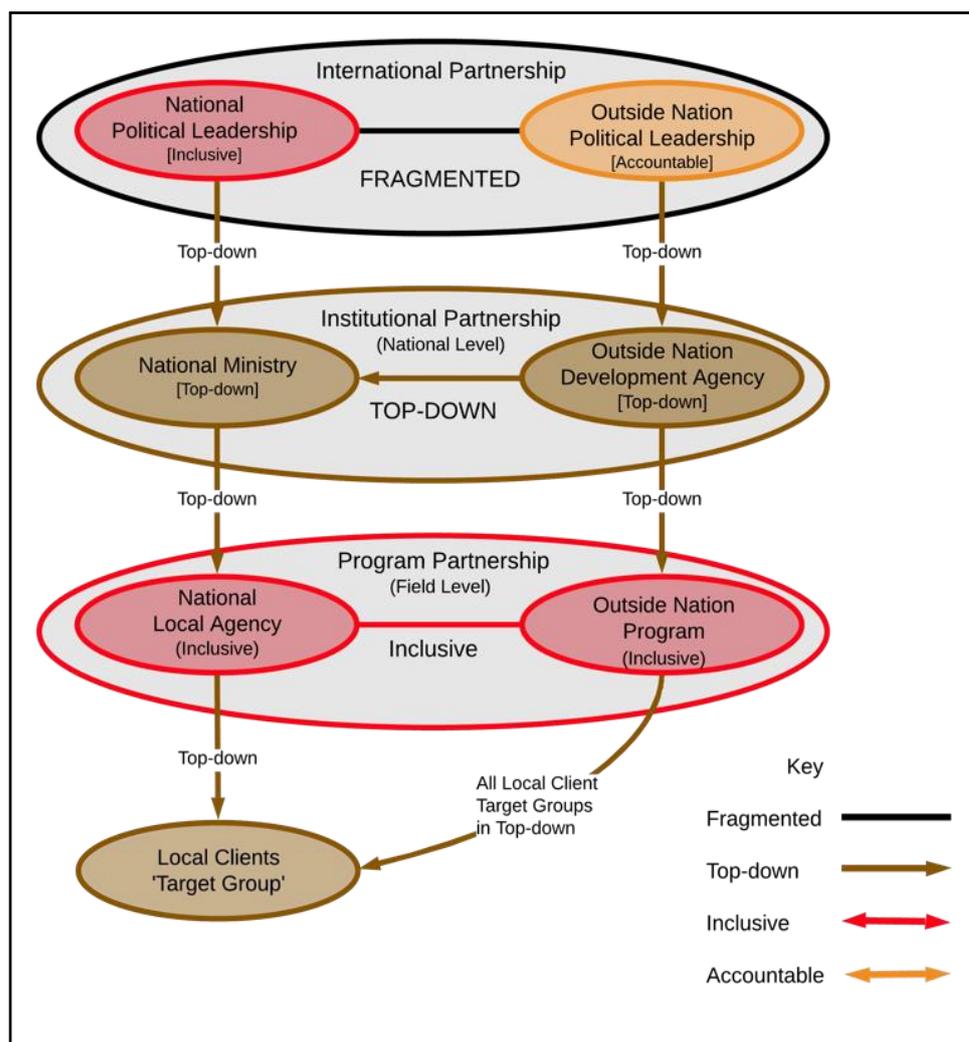
Figure 7. Top-down Partnership Network Map.

5. Cases of Using the Cooperative Capacity Framework

The following sections are descriptions of two cases of applying the CCF to partnerships. One covers a consultancy with a Fragmented system, and the second shows how effective an inclusive partnership can be in capacity exchange among partners and sustainability. Each of the cases described below demonstrates that a partner or partnership that achieves a higher state will show substantial improvement on any performance indicator from its original cooperative state or the next lower state. In the first case, moving a Fragmented system that was unable to produce outputs after four years in operation into Top-down resulted in the program meeting its output goals in the last two years of the program. The second case describes the results of capacity transfer in an inclusive partnership.

5.1. Case One: A Fragmented Partner

In this case, consultants were hired by a forest carbon reduction project to improve the management skills of the field team in a relatively remote part of a country in South-east Asia. Upon arrival, the consultants assessed the cooperative capacity of both the field team and the national team, which was based in the capital city. What was quickly clear was that both groups were in the Fragmented state, and that without first moving the national team into the Top-down state, it would be next to impossible to improve the performance of the field team. The national team's fragmentation was evident from its structure and lack of vision and mission. Its leadership was structurally divided among three officers—a national representative, a donor representative, and a manager. In addition, two other staff held

veto power over all program activities, giving them immense informal power without managerial accountability. Within this group of senior managers, there were at least three informal operational versions of the program's vision and mission. The leadership group were not consciously aware of these differences, and thus were handing down conflicting decisions and directions to the project staff and partners based on different versions of the vision and mission. To a large extent, it was these conflicting decisions and directions that were causing the problems identified in the field team.

Additional impacts from being in the Fragmented state included unconscious sabotage and gridlock. The lack of unity among senior staff resulted in them not being able to agree and establish internal management systems; all their internal systems—planning, financial, and monitoring and evaluation systems—were in disarray and almost everything was done on an ad hoc basis. This situation led to the following symptoms:

- Staff at all levels not following the chain of command or formal program processes.
- Confusion over who was accountable for managing relationships with external partners and stakeholders.
- Data and information being held by individuals without documentation. This required individuals to recollect data from these individuals for every presentation and report produced.
- Poor information flows and coordination between all parts of the program.
- Difficulty in joint problem solving among all parts of the program.
- Inability to follow through on commitments made by the program.

Each of these issues was directly related to the fact that the national office was in the Fragmented state. The problems with decision making and communication became so acute that field staff refused to implement decisions until they were absolutely positive that the decision would not be rescinded or changed (which is a form of sabotage consistent with the Fragmented state). The inability to communicate and follow up on commitments with their external partners was so bad that many of those partners were on the verge of pulling out. Local provincial and district agencies and villages no longer wanted to work with the project. Additionally, the donor agency was beginning the process of closing the project down due to poor performance.

However, assessment of the national office also revealed that the source of the fragmentation was from higher up the chain of command. The program itself was designed as a partnership of two ministries in the donor country; however, those ministries did not understand each other and did not know how to work together, meaning that their partnership was fragmented. Due to this fragmentation between the two ministries, each ministry was giving the program directions and feedback individually, and often directions from one ministry contradicted directions from the other. Additionally, these contradictory directions were going down to a divided leadership in the national office, which would then pass contradictory directions to the field.

The results from these very Fragmented systems were that virtually no outputs were being achieved. In the first four years of operation, the program was not able to organize and release the studies it was contracted to do, unable to develop working relations with local government, communities, and was yet to start implementing any of the trials it was designed to implement. The situation had become so bad that the donor government began to initiate the process for cancelling the project.

Figure 8a shows all the partnerships and relationships of the network. Based on the second simple rule presented above, it is evident that all the relationships of the field office, national office, and ministry partnership are in the Fragmented state, no matter what the state is of any of the other partners. Aside from showing the poor performance, this case demonstrates the inability of Fragmented organizations to partner effectively. All the Fragmented relationships with stakeholders, described above and shown in Figure 8a, were due to the program's own fragmentation.
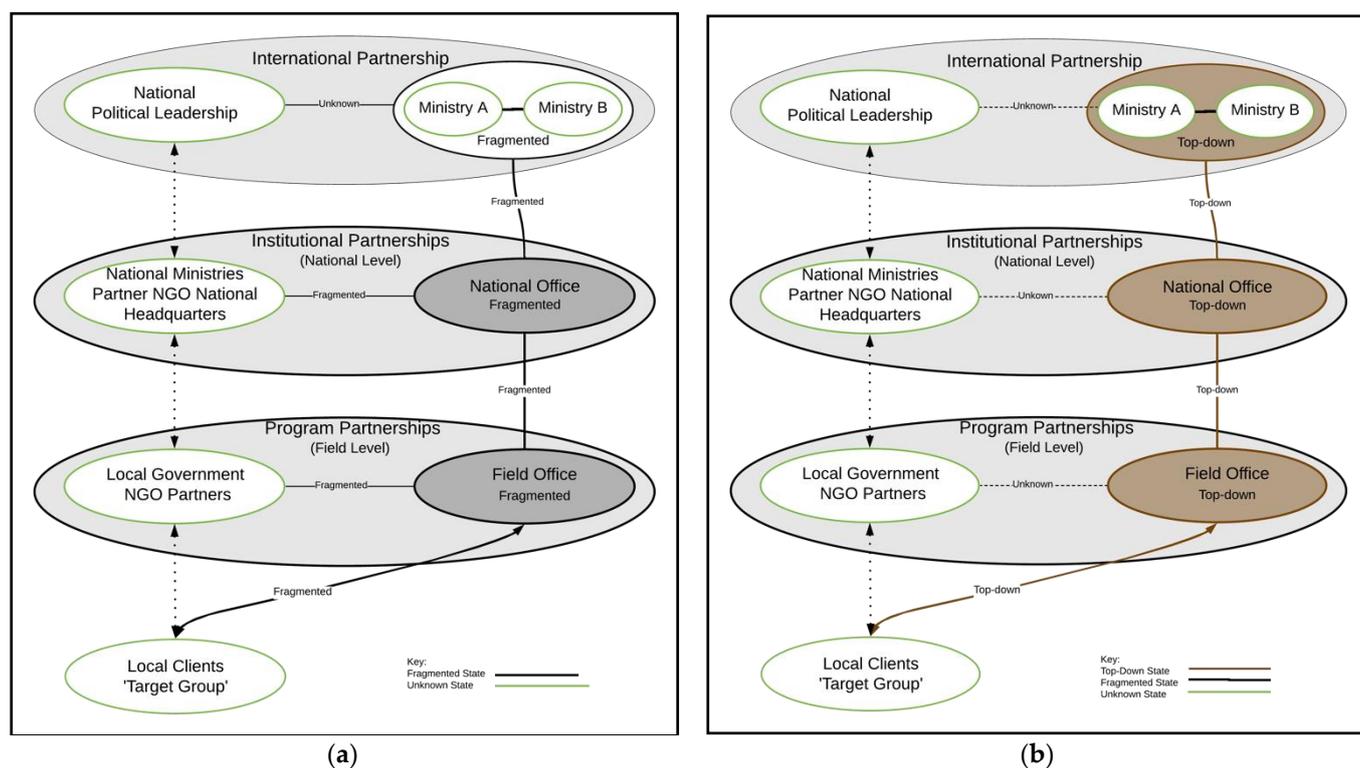
Figure 8. (**a**) Before: The partnership network in the Fragmented state; (**b**) Partnership network in the Top-down state.

During the consultancy, the project was able to help move key partners into the Top-down state. The national office quickly adopted a single, explicit vision, mission, and strategy and empowered one person as the program manager; this person was responsible for all decision making necessary to implement the strategy. With that program manager, the consultants helped the two ministries agree on how to work together and which one would be the dominant partner, responsible for making and communicating decisions. Finally, the program director took the responsibility to, based on the vision, mission, and strategy, develop a detailed work plan which the program manager ensured was followed by all staff. This also moved the field office into the Top-down state. The result of this work, which took over a year, was the system moving into Top-down, as illustrated in Figure 8b.

The improvement in results was dramatic. The program was given a two-year reprieve by the donor country. In those last two years, the program met its revised goals by publishing 40 research and learning articles, establishing village-run institutions to manage program activities in the villages, and completing a livelihoods income generation project. In addition, the program's relations and reputation with the local government had improved so much that the district head and provincial governor wrote letters to the donor requesting the project be extended after the designated closure date (unfortunately, it was not). This case shows both a strength and a weakness of the Top-down state. The strength was the outputs achieved after reaching the Top-down state, an example of substantially improving performance. The weakness was that, after the project closed, all activities ceased, demonstrating the difficulty a Top-down project has in creating sustainable partnership networks.

5.2. Case Two: An Inclusive Partnership

The following case describes one of the author's experience with a partnership between an international NGO implementing a child nutrition program and a local district health department. The contract for the NGO's child nutrition program dictated that the program implements several activities and achieves set targets for improving the nutrition

of children aged five and under. The exit plan was essentially a statement that local government agencies would take over the program's activities. No specifics for achieving this exit strategy were laid out in the contract. Neither time nor budget were included in the plans to develop a partnership with a local agency for joint implementation or takeover of program activities. Therefore, the program adopted the strategy of treating all its activities as demonstrations for local agencies. All the program's activities were on offer, like a buffet, to any permanent local institution to choose the ones they would like to adopt. The first agency to take the program up on this offer was a district health department. After a period of observing the program's activities, the district health department approached the program and asked to (a) learn how to implement the activities and (b) incorporate the activities into their annual plans and budgets. The partnership that evolved out of this request eventually reached the Inclusive state. Discussed below are key characteristics that show both organizations were in collaborative states, the transformation of the partnership itself to the Inclusive state, and the results of the collaboration.

The history of the district health department's engagement in the partnership strongly indicated that it was, at least, in the Inclusive state. As the INGO program began implementing interventions activities to teach mothers child nutrition, the program invited the district health department to observe the activities. In response to these invitations, lower-level staff observed and participated in several activities, such as community-based workshops and trainings. The lower-level staff were impressed and gave positive reports to their superiors. Soon, higher-level staff were also visiting and observing the program's activities. The higher-level staff were also impressed by the activities of the program and could see that the program's approaches were more effective in reaching the community than their own. As a result, the higher-level staff, and notably not the director of the department, approached the INGO's program project manager (again, not the program director) and asked to be taught how to implement the program's activities. After reaching a skill transfer agreement and the support of their directors, the project manager of the nutrition program and the head of the nutrition section of the health department planned and implemented a process where the health department could test and, if appropriate, adopt the nutrition program's activities.

There are some very strong indicators in this chain of events that show that the health department was in the Inclusive state. The first was that information flowed up the chain of command. Subordinates reported to their superiors that the program's approaches looked to be more effective than what the health department were using, encouraging their superiors to act. This would not happen in a Top-down system where such critical information does not flow up the chain of command. Second, the negotiations to begin working together took place mostly between the program's project manager and senior health department staff, not between their bosses. If established systems are not in place for such negotiations, as was the case here, this would not happen in a Top-down organization. In a Top-down system, the leader would make the approach and negotiate the details of the partnership, and then delegate tasks to subordinates. In this case, the head of the health department and director of the program only met a couple of times to confirm what their subordinates had already collaboratively decided on. This arrangement in which subordinates are free to collaboratively plan and implement, without micromanagement from above, or well-defined bureaucratic systems, can only happen between two collaborative partners. These behaviors are strong indicators that the health department was in the Inclusive state. Regarding the nutrition program itself, by the latter part of the program's life, it had passed through the Fragmented, Top-down, and Inclusive states and had reached the Aligned state.

The INGO's program had three strategies to achieve its overall goal, one of which was working directly with mothers to improve their children's nutrition. These were the activities the health department were interested to pilot and adopt. Each strategy was delegated to a project manager under the supervision of the program manager. The project managers had the agency to organize their own work and were accountable for developing

their own action plan, budget, and implementation processes to meet measurable strategic goals and implement the exit strategy. The program director, who was not a technical expert, provided support where necessary and managed the coordination between the three strategies, particularly the distribution of resources and preventing overlapping activities. The delegation, clear strategic goals, and type of coordination done by the program director indicate the nutrition program had reached the accountable Aligned state. Thus, both partners were capable of building an Inclusive partnership—and that is what happened. The partnership started in the Fragmented state. This was the period in which the health department observed the program's activities, and then negotiated how to move forward with the program. During this phase, there was no common goal that was worked out during negotiations. The partnership moved into the Top-down state during the early phase of implementation as, due to its practical expertise, the nutrition program took the lead as the dominant partner. The nutrition INGO program staff explained their work and guided the implementation of the first pilot activities themselves, with health department staff at first as observers, and then later as co-facilitators following the nutrition program's scripts. During this phase, the program staff also helped the health department staff to assess how these activities could benefit the health department.

During this Top-down phase, the nutrition program was working toward the goal of handing over these activities to the health department, but the health department had not yet made the commitment to incorporate the activities into their work. The partnership moved into the Inclusive state when the health department committed to adopting the activities piloted by the nutrition program. A series of regularly scheduled meetings, strategies, and roles generated an exit strategy, and power and decision making became shared based on the expertise of each partner. This established the partnership in the Inclusive state.

The nutrition program changed their role from leader to trainer, facilitator, and mentor. They worked with and led training and mentoring of the health department staff in conducting activities, and responded to feedback from the health department staff. As the two partners worked together to customize activities for the department of health, the health department staff took the lead in advocating, planning, and budgeting the adoption of the new activities by the district government and parliament. The nutrition program staff supported this advocacy with assistance in creating budgets and providing technical data.

This partnership itself was managed through a series of meetings where actions were assessed, feedback from both sides was obtained, and adjustments to plans and activity designs were made. Other than these meetings, there were no formal management and information systems, nor were any formal, measurable, strategic goals set. According to the project manager, "the core values of their work were open communication, listening, and inclusion". Both partners provided resources, staff, time, and money to the partnership. The program provided staff and resources for training and consultation, and continued support for their activities within the project area. The health department provided staff, time, and resources; in particular, they funded pilot activities outside of the nutrition program's project area. Figure 9 shows the states of the partnership at its most developed. The partnership achieved goals in the Inclusive state by virtue of its shared vision, mission, and strategy; shared power and decision making; shared leadership; the ability to share feedback; and use of under-developed management and information systems. The final results of this partnership were substantial. First, the advocacy effort was successful; the activities were incorporated into the annual plans of the health department and awarded a budget of approximately USD 500,000. Second, there was a sustainable transfer of capacity. The health department staff had mostly been trained in implementing the activities, and when the nutrition program closed a year earlier than expected, the health department continued implementing the activities—going as far as hiring ex-program staff to ensure they had the skills and knowledge of the staff to continue the work. Ten years after the project closed, one of those staff members posted the health department's budget on their

Facebook page, and the activities introduced by the nutrition program were still being conducted by the health department.
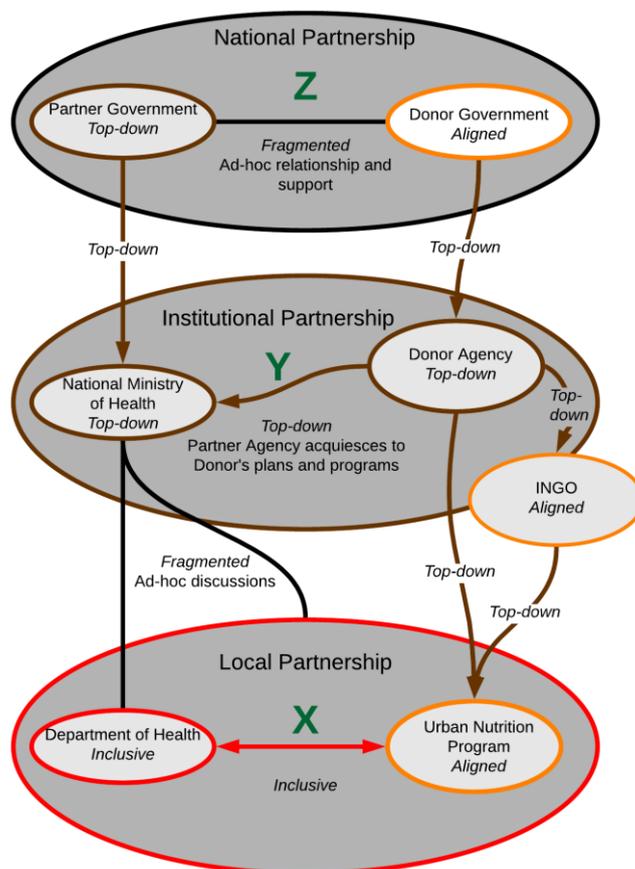
Figure 9. Partnership network in Inclusive state.

The achievement of these results depended on the partnership attaining the Inclusive state. Without the shared goals, governance, and agency of the Inclusive state, the partnership could not have practiced the "give and take" and shared the resources necessary to achieve such a sustainable transfer of skills and capacity.

5.3. Conclusions from Case One and Case Two

These cases show a couple of ways that the cooperative states of the stakeholders and partners in the development system affect results in the field. The first case shows two aspects of how cooperative capacity affects the performance of a partnership network. The first aspect in this case is how the cooperative capacity of a partnership far from the field can affect implementation on the ground. The fragmentation of the two partner agencies in the capital city of the donor nation contributed to the fragmentation of all of the management teams involved with the project and thus, the fragmentation of all of the project's relations with its local stakeholders. The result of this fragmentation resulted in very poor performance in the field and the potential closing of the project. The second aspect of this case illustrates the improvement of performance when moving up one state of the cooperative capacity ladder. Once the partnership between the two agencies and the management of the national and field offices had moved into the Top-down state, the project went from not meeting any of its targets in its first four years to meeting all of its revised targets in its last year and half.

The second case illustrates that a partnership in the Inclusive state can successfully transfer capacity in a way that the receiving partner can sustain that capacity after the project closes down. The Inclusive state is the first state where the three conditions for effec-

tive partnering—inclusion, common understanding, and trust—are in place, and is, therefore, the first state where effective and sustainable capacity transfer is likely to take place.

These cases illustrate the benefits of moving partners and partnerships to higher cooperative capacity states in order to improve performance in the field and effectively and sustainably transfer capacity to other partners.

6. Implications of the Cooperative Capacity Framework

The CCF can be put to many uses, including assessing partnerships, designing and implementing partnership development, building more effective partnership networks, and monitoring and evaluating partner and partnership performance. The CCF provides planners, implementers, and evaluators with useful tools:

- For program planners, it provides goals (each cooperative state) and objectives (the underlying key performance indicators laid out in the maturity matrix) for developing strong partnerships, and a tailored case for allocating time and resources to partnership development early in project implementation.
- For national planners, it provides partnership development strategies for increasing the likelihood of program sustainability and scaling.
- For program implementers, it provides a monitoring and diagnostic framework for identifying and correcting weaknesses in their partnership and stakeholder systems.
- For evaluators, it provides baseline and end line indicators of partner and partnership capacity that relate with performance.
- For all partners, it provides an additional assessment (after technical and financial assessments) for choosing partners as it will inform those choosing partners. The current states of the prospective partners informs both partners the best processes for working and the capacity building needed for the partnership to develop a truly collaborative relationship—the best processes for working with a prospective partner and if and how that partner will limit or support the performance of the prospective partnership.

7. Recommendations for Future Research

The literature on partnerships identifies various factors that influence the performance of partnerships. However, the causality of these factors is not established. Each factor's contribution to performance is intertwined with the others, so it is not known (a) if improving the status of one of the factors will improve the overall performance (the achievement of desired outputs, outcomes, and impacts) of a specific partnership, (b) how far does the factor need to develop before any improvement in performance is discernible, and (c) how long it might take before improvements are noticeable. The only way to know if improving any of these factors will have an impact on performance is to implement the change(s) and then see if they generate the desired improvements. Even then, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine causality. The Cooperative Capacity Framework has only been partially piloted as of the time of this writing. It would be useful to conduct studies to understand the above unknowns by conducting further research:

- To test and confirm the relation between the cooperative capacity states and performance.
- The impact of using the model to build the capacity of both relatively successful partnerships as well as failed or failing partnerships.
- To design improvements in methodology and tools to simplify conducting cooperative capacity assessments.
- To identify and relate the most effective and efficient capacity building activities for each of the states.
- To test and refine the descriptions of the attractor states presented in the maturity matrix.

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