

Introduction

Today's world confronts devastating natural disasters, widespread health concerns, pressing environmental emergencies, unstable economies, substantial unemployment, and the overall requirement to meet the needs of a substantial and growing population in a much more urbanized and developed globe. As an increased standard of living for larger segments has been an important developmental goal over recent decades, what happens when a larger cross section of the world's population lives in cities and acquires new tastes and demands? What are appropriate solutions when environmental challenges present sweeping and overarching threats?

These complicated times present two critical inextricably linked pathways. One is stimulated by the need to ensure as much equity, sustainability, and safety as possible across an ever interconnected and increasingly developed world. Concurrently, our times represent a pivotal moment calling for innovation of all types and the development of industries that can produce economic opportunity.

This pivotal moment in world history arrives on the heels of tremendous technological innovation. These advances changed the face of the world, having altered the nature of work and the pace of communication and social change. A shift ensued. Employment opportunities for those with limited formal education and skills gradually diminished. An economic downturn shed light on this new picture. Unemployment skyrocketed and gaps in wealth continued to increase. What will be the source of tomorrow's jobs? What kinds of innovations and industries can stimulate and maintain far-reaching economic opportunity?

Both of these pathways – the continued quest for greater equity and development, and the need for innovation and industry to maintain high standards of living – set the stage for creative thinking and active approaches to harnessing myriad segmented resources for new solutions. Multidimensional and complex challenges call for sophisticated solutions. Existing models of governance are probably not sufficient in surmounting the nature and scope of the obstacles of our future.

Consequently, new strategies for the future are required to respond effectively to social, economic, political, and natural challenges. Additionally, contemporary and future considerations require strategies to innovate proactively. Bluntly, the wellbeing of our global society is dependent on new offensive and defensive strategies. Therefore, society can benefit from altered ways of doing business. These new strategies must transcend established boundaries, and catalyze new forms of cooperation.

All institutions and industries in the public, private, and nongovernmental sectors coexist in an ecosystem. As centuries of development and technological advancement have constructed political, economic, and social structures beyond nature, new forms of interaction evolved. Humanity and the natural world have always been an ecosystem. However, the course of development over the centuries spawned sectors of governance, commerce, and even incorporated systems for civil society.

Institutions are composed of and constructed by people. Therefore, partnerships can only succeed with mutual respect and cooperation between individuals. Institutions define only one aspect of differences between people. The reality of an integrated globe is that people across demographic groups and nations interact more than ever. This level of connection is a tremendous opportunity, and could enhance peace and reconciliation. However, deep-seated sentiments and historical inequalities challenge any pursuit of unity. This is a universal consideration in any form of collaboration.

Different cultural groups have always coexisted in segments, but they were not always seamlessly linked. Nationalism forged new links and political forms, placing disparate groups under singular forms of governance promoting unity around particular behaviors and languages. An industrial revolution designed entirely new forms of segmentation. The technological revolution withered boundaries across segments national, industrial, and otherwise.

Regardless of political and industrial segments, interdependence has remained constant. A corporation's success depends on a market that likely includes a broad cross section of the general public. An independent nation's advancement depends not only on its relationship to its own subjects, but also on a global political sphere and degrees of private sector trade. National and local policies, along with the practices of large corporations, shape day-to-day livelihoods in civil society.

Technology raised the stakes of interdependence. It linked people, increasing the ability to interact across boundaries. The Internet in

particular birthed social networks that enable high levels of collaboration regardless of established boundaries.

This landscape, characterized by institutional and political boundaries yet potentially interactive through the ease of crossing boundaries technologically, brings a compelling blend of challenges and opportunities. If connectivity has increased, ostensibly, we can more readily harness resources to respond to disasters and cure diseases. When we can connect across sectors and boundaries, we can benefit from shared thinking that leads to innovation of all forms. This is fertile ground for partnerships.

Cross sector collaboration has proliferated recently. These partnerships are forming and evolving in local contexts and across national lines. They are altering approaches to development and spawning innovation. They represent new ways of doing business, but only in their infancy. These partnerships are emblematic of a shifting global landscape, but they are in fact the seeds of strategies for the future.

Our times require innovative thinking and practice in order to make critical decisions and solve problems. Strategic partnerships that cross the public, private, and nongovernmental sectors are increasingly surfacing as new forms of governance and information exchange. The notion of public private partnerships has developed over recent years. However, the incorporation of organizations representing the voice of civil society is also integral to cross sector partnerships. From nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at the community level to large established anchor institutions like universities, the engagement of the nongovernmental sector is critical to the effectiveness of cross sector partnerships. Overall, public/private/nongovernmental partnerships can be important vehicles in stimulating innovation as well as addressing the important social concerns of our times. These strategic cross sector partnerships can be both proactive and reactive and can take root in specific places and across boundaries.

In particular places and with respect to specific social concerns, it is important to harness resources that may reside in various disparate sectors and industries. Strategic partnerships have become the vehicles through which various participants combine resources and expertise to solve problems jointly or produce innovations. The idea for this book simultaneously emerged with the concept of the Program on Strategic Partnerships and Innovation at Columbia University's Earth Institute.

The Program was created to conduct focus groups with representatives of different sectors who have been involved in partnerships, and continually investigate manifestations of global strategic partnerships. This book emerges from this research in order to further define the nature, scope, effectiveness, and potential of strategic partnerships. If strategic cross

sector partnerships can potentially solve pressing global concerns, then what specifically must we understand about these collaborative pursuits that can increase their effectiveness? What variables shape partnerships' relative ability to operate effectively and achieve their intended results?