LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

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This article is intended to contribute to ongoing efforts in the immigration sector to increase knowledge regarding the creation, configuration, operation, evaluation and reform of local and regional partnerships as mechanisms for improving the provision of services needed to facilitate the settlement, integration and inclusion of newcomers. The article concludes that governmental and non-governmental stakeholders must undertake several initiatives related to partnerships in their local and regional communities, including: mapping the existing and emerging partnerships; assessing how effectively each partnership is operating; and assessing the extent to which those partnerships are making a substantial contribution in meeting the settlement, integration and inclusion of newcomers.

In recent decades there has been an increasing recognition of the growing importance of local and regional partnerships for various policy sectors, including the immigration and integration sector. Within the immigration and integration sector such partnerships have been considered and emerged in many local and regional communities that either receive and retain a substantial number of immigrants or would like to do so.

The overarching purpose of this article is to contribute to ongoing efforts in the immigration and integration sector to increase knowledge about local and regional partnerships so that governmental and non-governmental agencies can make more informed decisions on whether to create partnerships, how to operate and evaluate them and, if necessary, to reform or terminate them. Toward that end this article provides an explanation of partnerships and some particular types of partnerships, the factors that affect the creation and operation of partnerships, examples of informal and formal partnerships and some observations on the need for key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to enable and strengthen local and regional partnerships.

PARTNERSHIPS DEFINED

Partnerships are inter-organizational relationships or alliances established by two or more organizations, be they governmental and/or non-governmental organizations. Partnerships can be designed to pursue shared or at least compatible objectives. Such relationships are established either formally or informally through written or unwritten agreements. Invariably, partners are required to consider and possibly even negotiate how they will share authority and responsibility for decision-making, the contribution of the requisite resources, the risks and the benefits (Kernaghan, Mason and Borins, 2000:180).

In light of this definition it is important to underscore that generally partnerships related to immigration, settlement and integration sectors are established informally through unwritten agreements. Few, if any, are established through formal written agreements and few, if any are established as corporate legal entities pursuant to statutory frameworks such as, for example, Saskatchewan's Partnership Act. Notable exceptions to this are the formal written contributory agreements in which the federal or provincial governments are contributing varying amounts of financial resources to partnerships designed to advance the goals and objectives of creating warm and welcoming communities or providing some settlement and integration services to newcomers.

TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

In examining features of existing partnership and in considering features of any partnerships at the local or regional levels, it is useful to provide a taxonomy of partnerships. The taxonomy consists of five separate typologies that capture each of the following features of partnerships: the geographic areas they cover (e.g., local, regional, to national); the number of policy sectors in which partners are located; the organizational (e.g., single, dual and multi); the number of partners (e.g., two, three, or more); and the alignment of functions, roles and responsibilities of partnerships (e.g., consultative, contributory, operational, collaborative). Each of these five typologies is profiled in Table 1.

TABLE 1: FIVE FEATURES OF INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Typology 1	Typology 2	Typology 3	Typology 4	Typology 5
Geographic Areas of Partnership	Number of Policy Sectors	Number of Partners	Types of Partners	Alignment of Partnership Functions, Roles & Responsibilities
Local	Single-sector	Bipartite	Governmental	Consultative
Regional	Dual-sector	Tripartite	Non-Governmental	Contributory
Provincial	Multi-sector	Multipartite	Governmental/ Non-Governmental	Operational
National				Collaborative

Whereas the first four typologies are essentially self-explanatory and do not require further explanation, the fifth typology warrants a brief explanation. Typology 5, which was proffered by Kernaghan, Mason and Borins (2000:188-191), consists of the four major types of partnerships briefly described, in turn, below:

- Consultative Partnerships are those in which the principal activity of the partners is consultations on, among other things, their respective goals and the means by which to coordinate their initiatives in achieving them without undertaking any joint initiatives.

- Contributory Partnerships are those in which one or more partners make a financial or non-financial contribution to the partnership, but the other partner(s) are responsible for the actual initiative(s) undertaken.

- Operational Partnerships are those in which the partners simply collaborate at an operational level in undertaking various partnership initiatives without engaging in a full-fledged joint venture in which they share decision-making power and human or financial resources.

• Collaborative Partnerships are those in which key partners collaborate in a full-fledged partnership in which various partners are actively involved in performing key planning, management and operational functions and share decision-making power, costs and risks and benefits.

The five types of partnerships conceptualized above may not exist in their pure or precise form in practice. The reason for this is that in practice it is more likely to find hybrids than pure types either in their original forms or in their evolved forms.

Another important point to keep in mind in analyzing partnerships is that not all of them exist for the same purposes or involve the same type of relationships. In the case of purposes, there are substantive partnerships that advance substantive goals, symbolic partnerships that advance symbolic goals, and some that advance both types of goals. In the case of relationships, partnerships could be placed on a continuum ranging from what might be termed "symbiotic partnerships" to "parasitic partnerships". Whereas the former entail mutually supportive and beneficial relationships among all partners, the latter entail exploitative relationships between partners. In this context it may be useful to note that some analysts have proffered the term phony partnerships, those established" ...for the purpose of co-opting or otherwise manipulating various stakeholders; the likely result is disempowerment" of one or more member partners (Kernaghan, Mason, Borins, 2000:191).

FACTORS AFFECTING THE CREATION OF PARTNERSHIPS

Several major interrelated factors influence decisions of governmental and non-governmental officials in becoming involved in partnerships, especially those identified and explained below.

PRECONCEPTIONS OF PARTNERSHIPS

One major factor is the preconceptions of partnerships among organizational leaders and members. Partnerships are one of those phenomena on which people tend to either adopt a position or make decisions based largely on their preconceptions of costs, benefits and risks without examining any empirical evidence or even sound anecdotal evidence. While some organizational leaders and members suffer from "partnership mania', others suffer from "partnership phobia'. In both cases the positions and decisions of organizational leaders and members in supporting or opposing their creation are not based on rational and careful calculations of the risks, costs and benefits.

RECOGNITION OF NEED AND POTENTIAL VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS

An equally important factor is demonstrable and widespread recognition of the need for and potential value of a partnership. Such recognition is required both by potential partners and also other members of the community in which they operate. Such recognition by other members of the community can be important in underscoring for prospective partners the potential value of joining a partnership. Other members of the community can also perform a direct role in encouraging organizations to form partnerships.

CHAMPIONS AND LEADERS OF PARTNERSHIPS

Another major factor is the existence or absence of champions and leaders of partnerships in each community. Champions and leaders may or may not be the same persons. The reason for this is that whereas some may be highly influential advocates for the creation of a partnership, others may be influential actors who ensure priority partnership creation tasks are undertaken.

CALCULATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS

Among the most important factors in the creation of partnerships are the calculations among organizational leaders and members regarding what they perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of each partnership. Such calculations can be quite simple based on a very limited number of factors or highly complex based on a multiplicity of factors. The precise mix of factors in such calculations varies depending on what leaders and members value. Invariably, however, they tend to include considerations related to organizational goals, capacity and risks.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

In considering organizational goals their principal focus is on two sets of goals. The first set is related to meeting the settlement and integration/adaptation needs of newcomers and the second set is related to meeting the needs of the organizations themselves.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

In considering their organizational capacity they focus on the extent to which they have the requisite human or financial resources or other assets they can devote to creating and operating the partnership. Moreover, in considering their organizational capacity to enter into partnerships attention is devoted to the extent to which the various requisite resources and assets are provided by any of the other governmental and non-governmental partners. In some, though by no means in all cases, organizations are willing to enter into partnerships if there is a promise or at least a possibility that some of the requisite resources will be provided either by any one of the other key partners or contributed by any other entity that is not otherwise actively involved in the managerial or operational activities of the partnership. One example of such a partnership is the federal government's funding for creation and operation of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) such as the Calgary Immigrant Local Immigration Partnerships (CLIP, 2014). Another example is the funding provided by the Allies Project of the Maytree Foundation with resources from the JW McConnell Family Foundation for regional immigrant employment councils such as the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC, 2014).

ORGANIZATIONAL RISKS

In considering organizational risks they focus on the potential loss, misuse or sub-optimal use of their resources or assets. It also includes risks related either to legal liabilities or what might be termed reputational liabilities stemming from problems with any programs, projects or services involving the partnership. In the case of governmental stakeholders, it also includes political risks stemming from any such problems. For some organizations, of course, it also includes concerns about risks to their sustainability if a partnership arrangement compromises their access to some resources, jeopardizes their ability to continue performing a particular function or providing particular programs and services.

PERSONAL SELF-INTEREST

Personal self-interest is another major factor that affects the creation of partnerships either positively or negatively. Perceptions or calculations by influential leaders regarding the implications of a partnership on their own pecuniary interests can also influence their positions and decisions on whether to support or oppose a particular partnership. Thus, for some organizational leaders the question is not simply whether a partnership is in the public interest or any particular noble goal, or even whether it is in the interest of their own organization, but also whether it is in their own personal interest. Notwithstanding efforts to eliminate or at least subordinate it, utility self-maximization is a significant factor in decisions of organizational leaders related to the creation as well as the operation and termination of partnerships.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

The creation of partnerships is also affected by interpersonal relations among key representatives of the various partners. Whereas positive interpersonal relations facilitate the creation of partnerships, negative interpersonal relations tend to inhibit their creation. Interpersonal relations are much more significant than often assumed not only in the creation of partnerships, but also in the ongoing operations, evolution and termination.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE OPERATION OF PARTNERSHIPS

The operation of partnerships is affected by many of the same factors that affect their creation, as well as some other related factors (Owen, 2005). Some of the unique factors that impinge on the effective operation of any partnership include the following:

• Knowledge of partners about partnerships and particularly regarding what must be done to ensure they are operated effectively;

• Shared vision, goals, objectives, values and norms among the partners;

• Proactive, constructive, strategic, pragmatic and prudent leadership by each partner and particularly their respective officials who are directly involved in dealing with various aspects of the partnership;

• Positive, constructive and supportive relations as well as the requisite degree of trust and confidence among the partners;

• Appropriate organizational structures and processes for the governance, management, evaluation, accountability and termination of the partnership;

• Appropriate alignment of roles and responsibilities of the partners and those directly involved in the governance, management and administration of the partnership;

• Appropriate partnership documents that deal with various aspects of the legal, governance, management and administrative facets of the partnership;

• Effective planning, development, implementation and evaluation of any programs, projects or services that are undertaken within the scope of the partnership;

• Availability of appropriate and adequate levels of the requisite human and financial resources and other assets and the effective management of those resources and assets;

• Demonstrable and widespread recognition of the value

of the programs, projects, or services of the partnership.

The quality of the operation of any partnership and ultimately its ability to be sustained, is highly contingent on the existence of most, if not all, of those factors.

EXAMPLES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Two examples of local partnerships in urban centres help to illustrate some of the elements of the five typologies outlined in the taxonomy in Table 1. One is the local partnership in Brandon that was created several years ago and the other is the local partnership in Calgary that was established in 2013. The major difference between these two partnerships is their legal status and the degree to which they are institutionalized: one is a local partnership and the other is a regional partnership. Some elements of these two particular partnerships are likely found in comparable partnerships elsewhere in Canada (Gibson et al. 2010).

BRANDON'S LOCAL SETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Brandon immigration partnership is an example of a local city-based, multi-partite and multi-sector partnership. The partnership emerged approximately one decade ago with a substantial increase in the number of immigrants recruited to work at a new meat packing plant and its central purpose has been to provide settlement and integration/adaptation services to those immigrants as well as other that have followed them.

The membership of the partnership has been open from the start and has gradually expanded over time to include many governmental and non-governmental agencies. This included settlement, health, education, housing, employment, religious, policing and emergency services organizations, as well as the chamber of commerce, employers and the Rural Development Institute (RDI) located at Brandon University in the city (Buckaschuk 2009). During the early formation stage of the partnership the RDI performed a facilitative role in bringing prospective partners together to share important information among prospective partners.

The partnership has been relatively informal over time, in that it has not had a legal corporate status, formal agreement, or a highly formalized governing and management structure. Although the city-wide partnership remains relatively informal it has become increasingly institutionalized over time to the point where partners hold regular meetings, collaborate in providing professional development opportunities for staff members and volunteers, undertake joint-activities and coordinate the provision of some of their services, including new fees for service interpretation business.

Although the citywide partnership has been largely informal, it has facilitated the creation of several more formal partnerships among some of the partners.

Although the citywide partnership is largely consultative, some members are either contributing resources or assets to each other's services or working together at the operational level. In some cases most of the partners are also involved in joint or shared decision making for settlement and adaptation services for newcomers.

The existing partnership in Brandon will likely remain informal and less institutionalized. So too will some other existing and emergent local and regional partnerships in other communities in Manitoba (Silvius, 2005; Kelly et al., 2013a and 2013b). All indications are that for any of these partnerships to become more formal and institutionalized, local leaders and federal immigration officials must make a special effort to facilitate and support the Local Immigration Partnership.

CALGARY LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

The Calgary Local Immigrant Partnership (CLIP), which was established in 2013, is a very formal and highly institutionalized local, multi-sectoral, multi-partite partnership. The impetus for creating the CLIP was provided by the federal government's call for proposals aimed at launching its Local Immigrant Partnership (LIP) initiative in the western provinces comparable to those that have been established in Ontario. Their common purpose is to engage stakeholders from various sectors in intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral planning, coordination and collaboration in the provision of settlement services.

As part of an effort to maximize inclusion and effectiveness the CLIP consists of four major organizational entities—Council, Immigrant Advisory Table, Project Teams and Secretariat. The Council consists of twenty-one members drawn from a wide range of major governmental and non-governmental organizations in the city. Its key role is to develop a strategic plan based on the work of five special project teams, review that plan annually and to provide general guidance for those teams in implementing the plan. The five Project Teams consist of numerous members drawn from various organizations that perform key role in meeting the settlement and integration needs of immigrants. The Immigrant Advisory Table, which consists of 20-25 immigrants, contributes to the development of the strategic plan and various initiatives of the CLIP. The Secretariat, which consists of staff members seconded from the City of Calgary, the United Way and the Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary is responsible for providing logistical support of the Council, the Advisory Table and the Project Teams and ensuring they have access to the requisite research and researchers and managing the requisite accountabilities with Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

CONCLUSIONS

Partnerships are becoming increasingly pervasive and of paramount importance in the settlement sector. They are created, operated and adapted through the deliberate decisions and actions by leaders of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

All governmental and non-governmental organizations are faced with important questions regarding several matters, including: whether all the partnerships that are needed have been created; whether the existing partnerships would benefit from reforms either to their membership or to their governance, management and operational frameworks; whether some of the existing partnerships should be terminated; and whether to initiate new partnerships.

In dealing with those questions it is important, indeed imperative, that governmental and non-governmental stakeholders undertake several initiatives related to partnerships in their local and regional communities. Among the most important initiatives are mapping the existing and emerging partnerships, assessing how effectively each of those partnerships is operating; and assessing the extent to which those partnerships are making a substantial contribution in meeting the settlement/integration needs of newcomers. It is also important that existing and prospective partners acknowledge that partnerships must be flexible in adapting their configuration and operations in light of changes to the needs of immigrants.

The need to deal with partnerships is important in all types of communities. This includes rural areas where the number of immigrants has been increasing and local as well as regional partnerships are required as a means to build adequate settlement service capacity through inter-organizational coordination. Besides being a source of funding, provincial and federal agencies have to be proactive to enable, facilitate and support such partnerships and the related coordination among community organizations.

In keeping with their missions and mandates and the general principles of social responsibility, all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders must consider whether they are prepared to perform leadership, facilitative or supportive roles in ensuring adequate and appropriate partnerships are established to optimize the provision of settlement services for newcomers in local and regional communities.

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