

### Understanding partnerships for sustainable and inclusive development

The Partnerships Resource Centre (PrC) is a dedicated research centre positioned within the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, the Netherlands. The PrC creates, connects and shares knowledge on cross-sector partnerships for sustainable and inclusive development. The PrC aims to understand how cross-sector partnerships work and how they can contribute to sustainable transformations.

PrC's programmatic knowledge agenda has three dimensions:

#### 1. Creating knowledge to enhance the transformative capacity of partnerships

By conducting scientific research, the PrC contributes to theory development about the transformative role of partnerships for inclusive and sustainable development. Complex issue areas are unlikely to be explained by a single theory or approach. The PrC therefore strongly believes in theoretical, methodological and empirical triangulation to unravel causal mechanisms that can explain the impacts of cross-sector partnerships for sustainable and inclusive development. Our research investigates situated practices and uses comparative analysis of case studies for theory development and/or refinement.

#### 2. Connecting academic and practical knowledge to support mutual learning

The PrC is rooted in academic, practitioner and policy networks and aims to create feedback loops between academic and practical knowledge. The PrC conducts collaborative research, which is focused on mutual learning in order to contribute to change processes. Our research is therefore based on engagement with tenacious practices performed by organisational actors for identifying and analysing complex problems. It contributes to appreciative and situational inquiries of partnering practices, and translates experiential and tacit know-how into transmittable models and codified knowledge.

#### 3. Sharing knowledge to guide navigation and strategizing processes of partnering

The PrC creates a collaborative testing ground for partnering tools and hereby fulfills a creative lab function. Based on our research findings, we develop lean tools that align with the strategic and operational challenges of partnerships and test these – together with existing tools – in close collaboration with

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practitioners. We develop diagnostic approaches for identifying what contextualized partnering is good at or detecting spaces for partnering. We develop systematic and flexible forms of monitoring, data collection, process observation and analysis to pro-actively inform decision making in partnerships. The PrC is an open knowledge centre: our findings and outputs are in principle available to the general public.

### PrC 2018 - 2022

In the coming years, PrC aims to elaborate its programmatic agenda by engaging research with societal actors working and collaborating in transformative processes in four distinctive fields:

1. Coalitions with (multinational) lead firms realizing an inclusive business agenda that addresses major societal challenges;
2. Collaborations of value-chain and non-chain partners co-creating inclusive development in the Global South;
3. Cross-sector partnerships co-creating public and private value in the context of development objectives;
4. Global, regional and local alliances collaborating on governance arrangements addressing issues related to sustainable development.

When we link these fields with our three dimensions we envision effects relating to enhance partnering capacities, mutual learning with practitioners and providing strategic guidance for effective partnerships (see matrix below).

Every research project of the PrC will have an explicit link with at least one of the four fields and the three dimensions.

Envisioned effects of: →  Research engages with: ↓	Creating knowledge	Connecting knowledge	Sharing knowledge
	Enhanced transformative capacities partnerships	Mutual learning anchored in diverse hands-on partnering practices	Strategic guidance of navigation and strategizing processes in partnerships
<b>1. Coalitions with (multinational) lead firms realizing an inclusive business agenda and addressing societal challenges</b>	Understand the conditions and processes that enhance the transition to more 'inclusive' and 'sustainable' business models of lead companies through effective partnering.	Compare different business models work together on effective organizational fits: internal and external alignment of the chosen partnership approach that should enhance the (net) positive societal impact and value creation of companies.	Develop, validate and utilize managerial tools to enable companies to monitor and assess the effectiveness of their partnership portfolio management and report on their transformative strategies.
<b>2. Collaborations of value chain and non-chain actors co-creating inclusive development in the Global South</b>	Understand the conditions and processes that enable or constrain partners to transform terms of inclusion, deliberate, align business models, and embed transformative practices in local networks.	Compare, contextualize and characterize partnering practices and support an ex-ante diagnosis and practical monitoring of the conditions conducive to scalable approaches of inclusive development.	Develop, validate and utilize monitoring tools related to partnership- and context-specific theories of change, which support priority setting and strategic management in evolving processes of inclusive development.

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<b>3. Cross-sector partnerships co-creating public and private value in the context of development objectives</b>	Understand the conditions, roles, and processes that enable effective implementation of development objectives (such as the SDGs) through PPPs that result in both public and private value creation.	Explore, compare and contrast partnering approaches, how they unfold in practice and their transformative realities.	Develop, validate and utilize tools to monitor the balance between public and private value propositions of cross sector partnerships.
<b>4. Global, regional and local alliances collaborating on governance arrangements addressing issues related to sustainable development</b>	Understand and compare how global regional, and local alliances approach, govern and legitimize the transition towards sustainable development.	Explore and compare how global, regional and local alliances connect in order to develop contextualized sustainable pathways.	Develop, validate and utilize diagnostic tools for assessing the (ex-ante) fit of global and regional initiatives with locally embedded approaches to sustainable development.

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