

# Partnerships for biodiversity



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## Introduction

This research project focuses on the role of international intersectoral partnerships in the international biodiversity governance system. In the project, intersectoral partnerships are defined as strategic alliances between government, market and/or civil society actors. In the field of biodiversity conservation, private steering mechanisms, like partnerships, are becoming more common and are playing an increasingly prominent role. However, little is known about how successful they actually are. Also, the question is how these private steering mechanisms relate to governmental regimes. The research is aimed at both these questions of partnership effectiveness and the interaction between partnerships and governmental regimes. Until today, the research project has delivered two publications, which are presented below.

## Partnerships in forest governance

This research analyses the role of the many partnerships active in international forest governance. The analysis includes the effectiveness of partnerships, the functions they fulfill and the public-private interplay in the international forest biodiversity governance system. The most important conclusions are:

- There seems to be a trend for partnerships to choose for less stringent and less inclusive approaches towards sustainability. If this trend continues, the added value of partnerships in forest biodiversity governance will remain limited.
- Partnerships depend on effective government policy for their success. Especially 'classical' government policy on illegal logging, corruption and trade in illegal timber are prerequisites for large-scale sustainable forest use.
- The trend of forest partnerships to develop certification schemes has had a broad impact on the whole sustainable development discourse. Sustainability certification has become a widely accepted instrument. However, certification may not always be the most effective way to tackle a sustainable development problem.
- The current use of partnerships, ad hoc, focusing on one issue, is not the most effective or efficient way to contribute to forest governance. A more integral approach, with more metagovernance, should be more effective. The best level for more coordination could be the regional or ecosystem level.



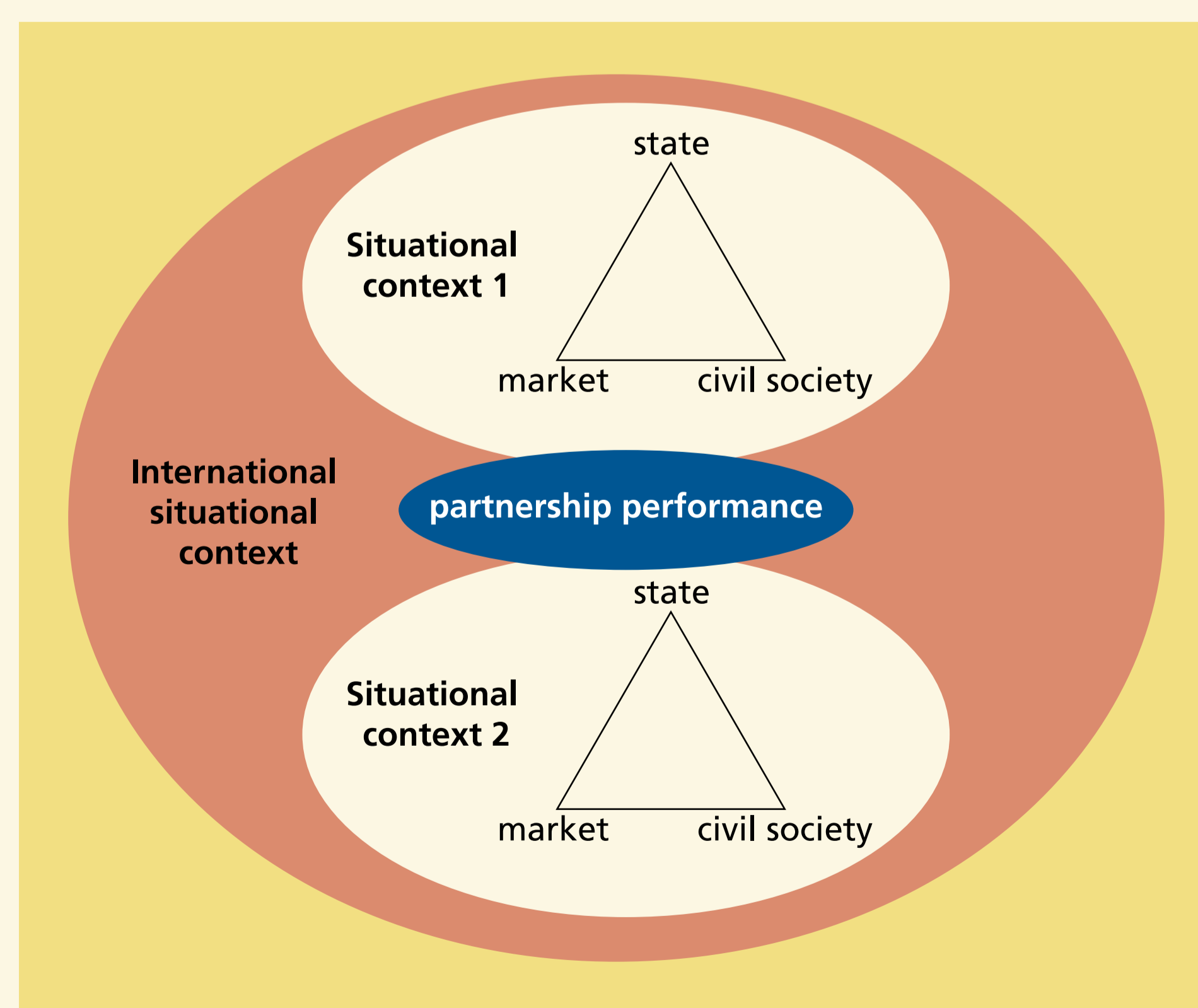
## Partnerships for development cooperation and marine biodiversity

In this research project, a transactional model is introduced to analyze the performance of partnership as governance mechanism in development cooperation. In two intersectoral North-South partnerships for marine biodiversity, the shrimp case and the anchoveta case, the relationships between partners are studied in terms of discourses, power, and rules. The main conclusions are:

- Because a basic consensus among partners on the strategies for sustainable development is needed in order for a partnership to be successful, groups with more inclusive views on sustainability are often not involved in partnerships.
- It is difficult for partnerships to change existing rules in intersectoral relations. The theoretical potential of the partnership approach to emancipate civil society in the South is difficult to realize in practice.
- Existing power inequalities have a large impact on partnership performance.
- Intersectoral North-South partnerships can contribute to the emancipation of the South by involving powerful Southern market actors.
- The question is whether partnership can help solve more fundamental sustainability problems. Partnership seems to be more valuable as a governance mechanism for making existing trends more sustainable than breaking unsustainable trends.



Photo: David Barr



Transactional model for partnership analysis

## References

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