

## **Non-Governmental Public Action Programme**

Published on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010  
ISBN: 978-0-85328-362-1

[www.lse.ac.uk/ngpa/publications](http://www.lse.ac.uk/ngpa/publications)

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**Research on relationships between  
government agencies and non-state providers  
of basic services: A discussion on the  
methods, theories and typologies used and  
ways forward**

**Whose Public Action?  
Analysing Inter-sectoral Collaboration for  
Service Delivery**

**Kelly Teamey**

# General introduction to NGPA Working Papers

Editor: Professor Jude Howell

The **NGPA Working Paper (NGPAWP)** series provides a vehicle for disseminating recent and ongoing research of researchers based at, or linked to the Non-Governmental Public Action Programme (NGPA). It aims to reflect the range and diversity of non-governmental public action, and understand the impact of public action.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.  
ISBN: 978-0-85328-362-1

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## Introduction

As detailed in the earlier Non-Governmental Public Action working paper based on the same research project (Teamey and McLoughlin 2008), relationships between non-state providers (NSPs) and government are hardly simple. Yet, the majority of research studies have tended to take a rather simplistic and reductionist view of these relationships, masking and bypassing their rich historical and contextual complexities.

This working paper provides an overview of the varied methods, theories and typologies that have been applied to research on relationships between NSPs and government. With the aim of creating a platform to critically discuss 'better' ways forward in terms of how research approaches are designed and carried out, this working paper considers the value of a range of typologies or models that have been developed by researchers to explain and analyse NSP-government relationships.

This is the second of two working papers for the Non-Governmental Public Action (NGPA) programme series based on a wide-ranging and rigorous literature review on NSP-government relationships.<sup>1</sup> The earlier working paper identifies and discusses a range of key issues that were classified as being of particular importance to understanding the dynamics of NSP-government relationships.<sup>2</sup> This second working paper is intended to further elaborate on the earlier working paper; to provide deeper insights into the methods and theories of research through which these key issues have emerged and offer suggestions as to how research can more rigorously explore the relevant key issues.

The initial literature review explored an extensive range of empirical, theoretical, exploratory and/or polemical literature that has examined relationships between government agencies and NSPs of basic services (i.e. education, health, water and sanitation) for poor people.<sup>3</sup> It was carried out to situate a research project, *Whose Public Action?* (WPA), part of the non-governmental public action (NGPA) programme

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<sup>1</sup> The original literature review is published on the WPA website:  
[http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/research/Service\\_Providers.shtml](http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/research/Service_Providers.shtml)

<sup>2</sup> See Teamey and McLoughlin (2008) *Understanding the dynamics of relationships between government agencies and non-state providers of basic services: Key issues emerging from the literature*

<sup>3</sup> The literature review did not cover government's relations with other forms of non-state providers. Nor did it seek to deal with all possible relationships unless these appear in this literature. Notably, relations of 'contract', which are an important part of much of the literature on public-private partnership, are a relatively unexplored and under-represented area of research. This finding was confirmed through a later unpublished annotated bibliography that looked specifically for case studies of contractual relationships.

that is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).<sup>4</sup>

The *Whose Public Action?* (WPA) research on NSP-government relationships involved in the provision of basic services focusing on education, health and sanitation sector programmes in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh uses a range of complementary research methods and approaches. Similar to the majority of empirical studies, the WPA research has employed a combination of interviews, documentary analysis and participant observations in historical and programme analysis and in case studies. The case study units of analysis for the WPA research are NSP-government relationships in a particular programmatic field of each of the three sectors: education (that is, primary education); sanitation (that is, community-led sanitation), and health (that is, primary health care). One case was selected per sector programme in each country.

The research questions and methodological approaches drawn up for the WPA research have given importance to history, context and recognised the complexity of factors that condition relationships. Within each case study, the WPA research has examined the evolution of the relationship as well as the factors that have formed (and conditioned the agendas) of NSPs and government agencies in the relationship. It takes into account macro and meso-level conditioning institutional factors, the internal dynamics of each organisation, critical incidents and routine aspects of the relationship. The WPA research goes beyond the comparative advantage approach to examine the strategies used by each organisation and the dynamics of the relationship as it evolves.

The WPA research agenda has not simplified NSP-government relationships into a particular typology; indeed the research was not so much interested in classification as in describing the dynamics of relations about 'public action'. The WPA research recognised that relationships are multi-dimensional and that they change and evolve over time. From this perspective, a typology may be of relevance in as much as it can provide a reference or entry point to understanding relations.

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<sup>4</sup> The literature analysed in the review on NSP-government relationships covers a cacophony of ontological and epistemological positions with regard to the value of NSPs and NSP-government relationships, explanatory theories of relationship dynamics, typological models to understand and measure NSP-government relationships, conditioning factors driving the dynamics of these relationships, best-practice methodological approaches to research on NSP-government relationships and appropriate ways forward.

## 1.0 Background

Abrahamsen (2004) explains two academic positions that can be identified in the literature on partnerships. The first position regards *partnerships as a positive initiative*, seeking to increase recipients' involvement in the design and implementation of development strategies. At the same time, the intrinsic difficulty of achieving a relationship of equality between rich and poor country actors is often acknowledged. Abrahamsen notes that, because the term 'partnership' is open to multiple interpretations, research analyses frequently note that there is ample room for differential practices and varying degrees of partnership. 'Genuine' partnerships are seen to imply mutual respect and equality of power and influence. The second position dismisses *partnerships as little more than rhetoric*. Partnerships in this interpretation are not 'for real', nor are they intended to transfer power to poor countries. Instead, 'partnerships are primarily rhetorical innovations, a re-branding of old-style practices and policies, or quite simply 'spin' of the kind we have come to associate with contemporary politics'.<sup>5</sup>

The literature on partnerships between NSPs and government tends to be dominated by a thin, prescriptive, instrumentalist account of the factors that make a relationship between government and NSP 'better'.<sup>6</sup> MacDonald and Chrisp (2005: 308), for example, argue that prescriptive discussions of partnership are exacerbated by the language of management which tends to be dominated by a 'command and control' type of rhetoric. They argue that, although partnership literature emphasises the need for trust, it rarely indicates how trust can be established. McLoughlin (2008) notes that, whereas a lack of trust is often noted in case studies, the impact of this lack of trust, on the success of the collaboration (usually understood as outcomes) is not widely discussed. Nor is the question of how relationships build trust over time (i.e. trust as a changing dynamic).

Brinkerhoff distinguishes development-orientated literature that focuses on partnership into three areas: *normative*, *reactive* or *instrumental*. The *normative*

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<sup>5</sup> See also the earlier working paper (Teamey and McLoughlin 2008) pp. 7-8 for further discussion

<sup>6</sup> Najam 2000; Brinkerhoff 2002; Mercer 2002; MacDonald and Chrisp 2005; Moran 2006

perspective, advocated primarily by NGOs, criticises government and donor practices, taking a moral position that they are the most ethically appropriate approach to sustainable development and service delivery. It argues that partnerships are an end in themselves and should maximise equity and inclusiveness. The *reactive* perspective, which appears primarily in donor and government reports, is a response to the normative stream, arguing that partnerships are important not so much in themselves but in order to achieve development objectives. The *instrumental* perspective values partnerships as a means to achieve other objectives (i.e. effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness) and is often accompanied by 'how to' literature.

Moran (2006) explains that the vast majority of literature on NSP-government relationships is concerned with evaluation and measurement of the quality of service provision and what is good and bad about state versus non-state provision. Moran (p. 204) finds that there is 'relatively little material that describes the processes of dialogue between government and representatives of NSPs in the development of policy, regulatory or contractual arrangements'. Similarly, McLoughlin further explains that, where the outcomes of contracting have been evaluated or studied, it is typically in relation to the quality of the services delivered to the end-user (in terms of efficiency, equity and/or accessibility). The dynamics of the contractual relationships or the environment in which they operate receive relatively little attention. Questions about whether or not contracting is more efficient and cost-effective than straight-forward government-delivered services seem to dominate the research agenda, rather than why certain contractual methods are used or what are the outcomes for the parties to the contract. The balance of power that emerged between the parties is not widely analysed in an objective, systematic or empirical way. In particular, understanding of the power dynamics as they evolve over time tends to be lacking.

Najam (2000) notes that in spite of a dramatic increase in the occurrence of NGO-government relationships, there is a lack of conceptual understanding of these relationships beyond simple typological classifications. For the most part, research on NSP-government relationships is descriptive (case studies) rather than analytical (Najam (2000); Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006)). Najam (p. 382) explains, 'for the most part, scholars have shied away from theory-building explorations of the nuances of NGO-government relations.'

## **2.0 Overview of methods used in research on NSP-government relationships**

The research studies summarised and discussed in this section represent a range of research methods, country contexts and sector focuses. The notion of ‘empirical research’ was broadened to include historical studies. Some of these held some level of relevance to our research interests (i.e. Whose Public Action?) but many did not directly undertake empirical research on NSP-government relationships. Many studies focused on NSPs and explored a range of relationships by NSPs with other bodies (particularly other NSPs), sometimes referring to different government agencies. Often there was not enough emphasis on the NSP relationship with a government agency to validate it as relevant to our research interests. Of those most relevant to our research project, 24 empirical research case studies were examined. These are divided below into those research studies looking specifically at NSP-government relationships; those looking at relationships that involve more actors aside from just NSPs and government (i.e. multi-organisational); relationships between NGOs and the dimension of government policies; and relationships between civil society more generally and government.

### ***NSP-government relationships:***

- Farrington and Bebbington 1992 (international);
- Stone 1996 (US);
- Sen 1999 (India);
- Sood 2000 (water sector – India);
- Tappin 2000 (Tuvalu);
- Dorman 2001 (Zimbabwe);
- Welle 2001 (water sector - Ghana);
- Brinkerhoff 2002 (health sector - Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan);
- Hilhorst 2003 (Philippines);
- Kumar (2004 US and India);
- Wamai 2004 (health sector - Finland and Kenya);
- Mageli 2005 (India);



- Mayhew 2005 (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Vietnam);
- Pereira 2005 (health sector - Chile and Uruguay);
- Ramanath 2005 (housing sector - Mumbai, India);
- Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom (all dated 2006) (health, education, water and sanitation – Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan and South Africa);
- Ullah et al. 2006 (health sector - Bangladesh)
- Lewis 2008 (UK, Philippines, Bangladesh);

***Multi-organisational relationships:***

- Lewis 1998 (Bangladesh);
- Lister 2000 (US and Latin America);
- Pettigrew 2003 (UK);
- Thompson 2005 (UK);

***Relationships between NSP and government policies:***

- Campos et al. 2004 (Pakistan);

***Civil society and government relationships:***

- Lewis 2004 (Bangladesh).

The majority of the empirical studies on NSP-government relationships examined in this review employed a qualitative research methodology, including at least one or more of the following methods: questionnaires, interviews (usually semi-structured), documentary analysis, historical analysis, participant observation, ethnographic analysis, discourse analysis, power analysis and/or action research. All of the empirical cases were qualitative except one that was primarily quantitative (Campos et al. 2004).<sup>7</sup>

The empirical research studies employing a qualitative research approach used a variety of methods and tools:

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<sup>7</sup> Campos et al. used two statistical techniques, multivariate regression and quantile regression, to test the effectiveness of three broad factors explaining the success of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) in the Northern Areas of Pakistan (i.e. the extent of beneficiary participation, characteristics of leadership, and economic factors).

- **Combination of interviews, documentary analysis and participant observation:** Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Welle 2001; Lewis 2008; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Thompson 2005
- **Interviews and documentary analysis:** Stone 1996; Sen 1999; Tappin 2000; Lister 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Wamai 2004; Mayhew 2005; Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom 2006
- **Interviews and questionnaires:** Stone 1996; Campos et al 2004; Kumar 2004; Ullah et al. 2006
- **Ethnography (primarily):** Lewis 1998, 2004; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Mageli 2003
- **Historical analysis:** Stone 1996; Lewis 1998, 2004, 2008; Sen 1999; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Mageli 2003; Mayhew 2005; Ramanath 2005;
- **Discourse analysis:** Welle 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003
- **Evaluation:** Farrington and Bebbington 1992

Several of the empirical studies used a comparative analytic case study approach.<sup>8</sup> Two of the empirical studies compared different relationships, one within the same national NGO in Ghana (Welle) and the other between different NGO-government relationships within Mumbai (Ramanath). However, the majority of comparative research studies compare relationships between different countries (Brinkerhoff; Wamai; Mayhew; Pereira; Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom).<sup>9</sup>

Several empirical studies used historical analysis methods as the core component of their methodological framework (Stone 1996; Lewis 1998, 2004, 2008; Sen 1999; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Mageli 2005; Mayhew 2005; Ramanath 2005). These studies all emphasise the importance of analysing NSPs and their various relationships through a historical framework that prioritises the

<sup>8</sup> Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Wamai 2004; Mayhew 2005; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom – all 2006; Lewis 2008

<sup>9</sup> Kumar (2004) compared different 'master' contractual arrangements (i.e. complex or indirect contracts by which a government agency contracts a 'master contractor' that sub-contracts a range of organisations) in the US and India. Pereira compared NSP-government relationships in health sector reform efforts in Uruguay and Chile. Brinkerhoff (2002) also compared health sector reform efforts through NGO-government relationships in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Mayhew compares the legislative history of NGO-government relationships in four countries: Vietnam, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Nepal. Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom (all 2006) compare types of engagement between NSPs and government agencies in the education, health, water and sanitation sectors in Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan and South Africa. Lewis (2008) compared life-work histories of practitioners who had worked in the government and civil society sectors throughout their careers in the UK, Philippines and Bangladesh.

particular context of the research study and the evolution of the NSP and its various relationships, including different levels of government. These studies used archival and documentary analysis in combination either with interviews (Stone; Sen; Brinkerhoff; Mayhew) or interviews and participant observation techniques (Lewis; Sood; Dorman; Hilhorst; Mageli; Ramanath). All of the empirical studies using historical frameworks tend to categorise analyses through bounded segments of time looking generally at key issues or critical incidents that emerged.

Half of the 24 empirical research studies undertook ethnography or used an 'ethnographic perspective' (Lewis 1998, 2004, 2008; Sood 2000; Welle 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Wamai 2004; Mageli 2005; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Thompson 2005).<sup>10</sup> In the case of the current research, it would imply participating in, and examining, everyday practices of the NSP and the government agency, as well as in particular events that are of interest to the relevant research. For example, Pettigrew employed an critically ethnographic action research framework to better understand the 'pathways of participation' amongst individuals involved in a multi-organisational relationship. To carry out this research, Pettigrew was an active participant as a member of one of the organisations and wrote critical reflective fieldnotes of her own and others' experiences. She used a Foucauldian (Foucault 1984) notion of power (i.e. how power is intricately bound with legitimacy of certain types of knowledge over others and notions of truth) as a central theoretical and methodological concept in order to locate nuances of equality and inequality, levels and types of participation, and levels and types of conflict, negotiation and manipulation. In addition, she undertook historical analyses of the development and emergence of the partnership, and studies of current formal and informal 'back-staging' interactions within the partnership.

Several articles discuss theoretical and methodological values of employing ethnographic perspectives to empirical research on relationships between NGOs or with other organisations (Fisher 1997; Markowitz 2001; Lewis et al. 2003; Elyachar

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<sup>10</sup> Contemporary ethnographic research is often characterised by fragmentation and diversity; there is an abundance of methods, perspectives and theoretical justifications, alongside multiple methods of research, analysis and representation. For example, doing a traditional ethnography requires a broad, in-depth, long-term study of a social or cultural group, whereas an ethnographic perspective employs reflective participant observation techniques (Green and Bloom 1997; Jeffrey and Troman 2004) using a more focused, short-term approach. Several empirical studies were characteristic of ethnography (Lewis 1998, 2004; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003), whereas the others employed 'ethnographic perspectives' through participant observation techniques that were accompanied more strongly by other methods, such as interviews and documentary analysis (Sood 2000; Welle 2001; Wamai 2004; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Thompson 2005).

2003; Pettigrew 2003; Bebbington et al. 2003). The relative depth of discussions on ethnographic approaches may arise because they are considered as alternatives to normative approaches; perhaps more explanation has been seen as necessary. Markowitz argues that ethnographic research approaches are valuable in analysing how organisations connect with other aspects of society – the state, municipalities, families, production and exchange systems and cultural institutions, in sorting out the connections between the global and the local. Lewis et al. argue that ethnographic studies of organisations are few in number in spite of the common proposal that there should be more.<sup>11</sup>

### **3.0 Theoretical contributions to NSP- government relationships**

This section of the working paper briefly identifies the varied theoretical frameworks used by different studies on NSP-government relationships in the literature review. This section of the working paper aims to highlight some of the theoretical frameworks that have been applied in relevant research, rather than discuss them in great detail.

Several writers argue that there is a shortage of theoretical analyses of the nature of NSP-government relationships.<sup>12</sup> For example, Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2002) claim that, although governments' relationships with non-profit organisations have been examined from many angles, no comprehensive theory exists to explain and describe these relationships. Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006) argue that there is an excessive emphasis on technical and normative studies that are rich in detail but lacking both in contextualisation and theorisation. Similarly, Hulme and Edwards (1997) contend that there is a lack of theoretical contribution to understanding relationships between NGOs, states and donors. Yet, in spite of these claims, there are numerous theoretical explanations of specific issues related to NSP-government relationships from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. The primary dilemma is agreement as to what theories are sufficient for understanding the complexity of relationships.

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis et al. contend, however, that an ethnographic approach tends only to generate a partial understanding that needs to be complemented by a closer engagement with business management and organisational theories, especially those linking culture and agency. Elyachar explains that ethnography is located between structure and process and can help illuminate complex processes of change in particular historical conjunctures..

<sup>12</sup> Salamon and Anheier 1996; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Lister 2000; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Pereira 2005; Selsky and Parker 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006

Many different theoretical frameworks were mentioned or discussed in the empirical studies on NSP-government relationships. Few, however, were rigorously applied. Each theoretical framework contributes to different perspectives, characteristics and dimensions of NSP-government relationships. These theories are discussed at greater length in the full literature review (Teamey 2007): *new institutional economics theory, ecological theory, civil society, power, discourse theory, resource dependency, organisational theory, inter-organisational theory, welfare citizenship theory, government-market failure theory, supply-side theory, trust theory, welfare state theory, interdependence theory, social origins theory, principal-agent theory and social capital*.

It must be noted that the notion of social capital is strongly linked to the importance of networks, coalitions and alliances of individuals within NGOs and government agencies. Although not rigorously applied as an explicit theoretical framework (i.e. social capital), the majority of literature relevant to NSP-government relationships argues that all NSPs are affiliated with wider networks that directly and indirectly influence their relationships with government agencies.<sup>13</sup> Theories of social capital can help explain different dynamics within NSP-government relationships (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Evans 1996).<sup>14</sup>

There were few empirical studies that applied theoretical frameworks in a rigorous way across one or more studies: *new institutional economics theory, ecological theory, civil society and power*. These frameworks are briefly outlined here.

Campos et al. (2004) used a *New Institutional Economics* (NIE) theoretical approach to examine the institutional success of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Adopting a quantitative approach, Campos et al.

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<sup>13</sup> Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Stone 1996; Fisher 1997; Fowler 1997; Lorgen 1998; Lister 2000; Sood 2000; Brainard and Siplon 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Haque 2002 and 2004; Bouget and Prouteau 2003; Elyachar 2003; Hilhorst 2003; Campos et al. 2004; Henry et al. 2005; Mageli 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006; Nelson 2006

<sup>14</sup> Evans, for example, views relationships between government and non-profit sectors as having characteristics of 'synergy' and being composed of two integral parts: *complementarity* and *embeddedness*. Complementarity is the conventional way of conceptualising mutually supportive relations between public and private actors. Embeddedness implies that the networks of trusts and collaboration that are created span the public/private boundary and bind state and civil society together. Bourdieu and Wacquant explain their notion of social capital as the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Levels of social capital, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant are interrelated with other forms of capital: economic, cultural, symbolic and linguistic.

(2004) adopt and adapt Albert Hirschman's (1970) three broad responses to decline in firms and politics (exit, voice and loyalty) to explain the AKRSP's success in ensuring accountability: *voice* (i.e. democratic participation by beneficiaries); *hierarchy* (i.e. characteristics of leadership); and *exit* (i.e. moving demand to an alternative provider).<sup>15</sup>

In her research on the evolution of three NGO-government relationships in the housing sector of Mumbai, Ramanath (2005) used *ecological theory* to understand NGO-government interactions over the lifetimes of the NGOs with the term 'Ecosystem' to refer to organisms and the interconnected environment in which they function, becoming increasingly complex through a series of ecological successions. The application of ecological theory to organisational studies, assumes that organisations, like organisms, respond to their environments by becoming increasingly complex. However, Ramanath argues that assumptions about the parallels with ecosystems ignore the dynamics of organisations and their variability across time and space.

*Civil society* is identified and discussed in greater detail in the 'Boundaries' section of the corresponding working paper and full literature review. There are different theories and perceptions of what civil society is and why it is important in any given context, which have serious implications for the degree to which NSP-government relationship dynamics can be more fully understood.<sup>16</sup>

Several empirical studies explicitly use *power* as their core analytic concept (Stone 1996; Lewis 1998, 2002, 2004, 2008; Tappin 2000; Lister 2000; Welle 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Thompson 2005). 'Power' frameworks were employed using different theoretical and methodological approaches. Although it is somewhat rare to

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<sup>15</sup> Also using an NIE theoretical framework in a comparative research study of health sector reform in Chile and Uruguay, Pereira (2005) claims that organisations are influenced by their environment but primarily governed by socially constructed belief systems and normative rules. For example, the state provides the context and frame within which an NGO functions to house the urban poor and is a critical source for legitimating NGO change and behaviour. NIE asserts the importance of the state as a major influence in the development of organisational forms; changes in organisations are a result of their relative embeddedness in markets and the state.

<sup>16</sup> For example, as Lewis (2004: 303-4) argues, the normative view of civil society "embodies particular types of organisational form and certain 'positive' values" that describe 'civil society as a 'good thing'. These positive values tend to exclude cultural norms, such as organisational ties of family and kinship, existing beyond the household, that are core to Bangladeshi society. As Lewis argues, a liberal normative view is most enthusiastically embraced by development agencies, suggesting that civil society can balance the state and the market by reducing the abuse of power and "becoming a third source of social service provision". Lewis argues that this view tends to equate (Bangladeshi) civil society with NGOs, ignoring other organisations and forms of action, the historical and political processes that have generated it, and the complexity of interaction between state and civil society.

locate studies that explicitly use power to shape and examine partnerships, there is additional debate as to which theoretical frameworks of power are appropriate to explore the complexity of relationships.<sup>17</sup> For example, Lister (2000) uses an organisational theory framework also adapted from Dahl (1957) to explore issues of power and to understand the processes of partnership between an international and national NGO and a bi-lateral donor agency. Dahl's (1957) 'held' view of power explains that A has power over B to the extent to which he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do. This view identifies different dimensions of power: *the base of power, the means of power, the scope of power, the amount of power, and the framework of power*. However, as Welle explains, although this framework helped to explain some aspects of power imbalance (and the reasons behind this) within the two partnerships, Lister still found Dahl's framework of power to be inadequate in advancing an understanding of partnerships and their underlying power relations. Welle compares two different relationships between a national NGO with an INGO and a local government agency. She concludes that Dahl's dimensions of power do not adequately address the complexity of the interactions actually observed. Dahl's framework neglected important aspects of communication (i.e. dialogue) which actually throw a more positive light on the partnership than would have been identified through Dahl's approach.

## **4.0 Typological classifications of NSP-government relationships**

The literature presents a bewildering array of typological or conceptual frameworks for describing and analysing these relationships. Over twenty typologies were located in the literature, many of which are rather simplistic and repetitive in their usage of particular adjectives (i.e. 'cooperative', 'collaborative', 'competitive', 'conflictual'). As Smith and Gronebjerg (2006: 222) explain, 'a wealth of conceptual perspectives is

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<sup>17</sup> Crawford (2003) explains that research on relationships taking into account power as a core concept examines decision-making structures and the politics behind practices and activities. Lewis et al. (2003) argue that the values and meanings that become dominant in a development project arise from the balance of power between different interest groups within and surrounding the organisations implementing the project. The ways in which these power relationships are ultimately worked out and the routes through which particular meanings come to prominence are matters for empirical study. This means tracing project histories, charting the interactions among agencies, the material gains, values and meanings struggled for by different individuals within each agency, and the alternative meanings regarding the purpose to which project resources are directed.

available by which one may seek to disentangle these complexities of government-nonprofit relationships.'

Smith and Gronebjerg's (2006) three broad theoretical frameworks conceptualising government-nonprofit relationships have been applied to assist in categorising the broad range of typologies located in the literature:

- *Demand/supply model*: The dominant model that focuses on the ways in which government and nonprofits complement or compensate for one another's weaknesses in meeting the need for particular types of goods and services; also broken down into the 'market niche' and 'transaction' models.<sup>18</sup>
- *Civil society/social movement* – Focuses on the multi-dimensional aspect of NGO-nonprofit relations considering how social, economic and political structures combine to create complex dynamics in the relations between government and nonprofits.<sup>19</sup>
- *Regime/neo-institutional model* – Reflects efforts to understand the processes by which social structures including nonprofit organizations become institutionalized over time and the conditions under which governmental structures take on particular forms (strictly comparative in nature).<sup>20</sup>

Classifications or typologies of NSP-government relationships vary in terms of the types of description and dimensions employed (i.e. some are rather simplistic single-layer continuums and others are multi-dimensional models) as well as in the focus of the examination. The majority of typologies tend to focus more intensively on the

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<sup>18</sup> Both the market niche and transaction models conceive of the relationship as fundamentally structured around the demand for and supply of particular types of economic goods and services within the broader context of rational choice. *Market niche model* – nonprofits are understood as occupying special niches in the market. *Transaction model* – involve exchanges among actors who make more or less rational decisions about whether the benefits of a particular exchange outweigh the costs of establishing the exchange and monitoring. Informed by models of political power, organizational behaviour and decision-making, resource dependency and transaction theory. The demand and supply perspective of government-nonprofit relationships are a mix of competition and complementarity among separate and distinct entities – shifts in capacities of one sector to address demands or in the preference structures for specific goods and services will directly affect demands encountered by the other sector (s). There are however, no distinctive properties to community organizations and social relations.

<sup>19</sup> The civil society/social movement model takes account of how relations evolve over time and space, as compared with the demand/supply model. The model places emphasis on goals such as pluralism, civic participation and voluntarism, serving to create an understanding of solidarity among individuals and strengthen community in a variety of ways. It raises important questions about how government-nonprofit relationships emerge and change over time within the framework of a given society. The model is not easily amenable to comparative analyses though, nor does it elaborate on macroanalytic frameworks for understanding relationships over time. The model is well complemented with a more institutionalist perspective that can help provide insight into differences in the government-nonprofit relationships across countries.

<sup>20</sup> The regime/neo-institutional model includes a diverse set of theoretical perspectives that centres explanation around the structure and role of state actors for phenomena including a variety of cross-national differences. They have emerged out of efforts to understand how nonprofits relate to the overall societal systems.



comparative advantages or effects of the relationship from the viewpoint of the government and/or the NSP rather than the interactions and dynamics occurring between the NSP and the government. This reflects the narrower view of interaction in the demand/supply theoretical model described by Smith and Gronebjerg.

There is a range of critiques of the perceived comparative advantages of NSPs and of relationships between NSPs and government agencies. Lewis (1998) for example argues that fixed notions of 'comparative advantages' were not appropriate as the partnership was created through informal, personal links and evolving relationships. Moreover, the perceived comparative advantages of each particular NGO and government agency participating in the partnership were different.

Each typological model places reductionist boundaries around interpretations of these relationships. In actuality, any relationship is a highly complex process involving multiple actors in particular contexts at certain points in time. The value of typologies is their analytic usefulness in indicating and making sense of some of the main attributes of relationships. Some typologies are potentially helpful as heuristic starting points. At least some of the typological models may open windows that will enable deeper analysis of NSP-government relationships.

The typologies briefly outlined below were selected from literature based on empirical studies to theoretical 'think pieces' that did not refer to specific empirical research. The majority of the typologies were not applied to empirical cases, but offered possible ways of researching NSP-government relationships. The *Whose Public Action* research, which inspired the literature review and these corresponding working papers, particularly considered the typologies offered by Lewis (1997), Coston (1998), Najam (2000) and Welle (2001), with particular interest in Ramanath's (2005) application of Najam's model. This is reflective of two of the most commonly cited typologies in the literature (from [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com) on 14/11/08): Young (2000) - 90 citations; Coston (1998) - 66 citations; Brinkerhoff (2002) - 53 citations and Najam (2000) - 39 citations. These typologies arguably take the highest level of complexity into account.

The table below takes Smith and Gronebjerg theoretical/conceptual models into account, outlining the key dimensions and areas of interaction between the NSP and government that are described by each author.

**Table 4.0: Categories of key typologies**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Key dimensions</b>	<b>Types of government-NSP interactions</b>
Demand/supply	Pereira (2005)	Political meaning and effectiveness	Partners Challengers
Demand/supply (transaction)	Maxwell and Riddell (1998)	Policy dialogue Information sharing	Spectrum from 'weak' to 'strong'
Demand/supply (transaction)	Farrington and Lewis (1993)	Level of formality in links and interaction	Formal collaboration Formal or informal links Formal or informal interaction
Demand/supply (transaction) and Neo-institutional	Whose Public Action research team	Level of authority/dominance and formality in links and interaction	Horizontal/vertical and Formal/informal
Demand/supply and Neo-institutional	Ullah et al. (2006)	Autonomy, structure, communication	Competition, Co-operation, Coordination, Collaboration, Control
Demand/supply (transaction) and Regime	Wamai (2004)	Level of government/NGO domination in funding and/or service delivery	Dual NGO-dominated Government-dominated Collaborative
Demand/supply (transaction) and Neo-institutional	Davies (2002)	Governance	Principal/agent relations Inter-organisational negotiation System coordination
Demand/supply (transaction) and Neo-institutional	Batley (2006)	Levels of formality, power symmetry and dependency	Loose understandings Hierarchical contract Co-production Autonomous or dependent
Demand/supply and Neo-institutional	Young (2000)	Demand, responsibility, accountability	Supplementary Complementary Adversarial
Demand/supply (Transaction) and Civil-society	Selsky and Parker (2005)	Social issues Causes	Transactional Developmental

Civil society and Neo-institutional	Lewis (1997)	Length of time; Roles; Risk Differences; Purpose; Communication	Active partnerships Dependent partnerships
Civil society and Neo-institutional	Welle (2001) – critical and discourse theories	Links between discourses of partnership and discourses of development approaches or ‘public action’	Efficiency discourse Solidarity discourse
Civil society and Neo-institutional	Skelcher et al. (2005) – democratic and discourse theory	Club Agency Polity	Managerial discourse Consociationalism Participatory discourse
Neo-institutional and Demand/supply (transaction)	Coston (1998) - pluralism	Degree of power symmetry Extent of government acceptance of institutional pluralism Formality of relationship	Eight-point spectrum from ‘repression’ to ‘collaboration’
Neo-institutional and Demand/supply (transaction)	Brinkerhoff (2002)	Mutuality Organisational identity	Contracting Extension Co-optation Gradual absorption
Neo-institutional and Demand/supply	Najam (2000) – strategic institutional interests	Similarity of goals (ends) and strategies (means)	Cooperation Complementarity Co-optation Confrontation
Neo-institutional and Civil society	Ramanath (2005)	Similarity of goals and strategies Tactics Key features and influences Historical process	Najam (2000) and a focus on tactical actions (repertoire of tactics)

#### **4.1 Single framework (Demand/supply model):**

Pereira 2005; Maxwell and Riddell 1998; Farrington and Lewis 1993

These three typological models reflect the emphasis on the organisations themselves as the dependent variable and depicted in the Demand/supply theoretical/conceptual framework.

Pereira (2005) distinguishes between NSPs as either *partners* or *challengers* of government. While acknowledging that this categorisation is ‘somewhat fictitious’, Pereira argues that it has value in explaining the political meaning and effectiveness

of NSP action. NSPs as partners function more as collaborators of the government in achieving publicly defined goals. In contrast, NSPs as challengers aspire to hold the government accountable for providing access to basic services for all. Pereira argues that NSPs can act as both partner and challenger of government simultaneously in different dimensions of relationships (e.g. service delivery implementation and policy advocacy).

The diagram below depicts Maxwell and Riddell's (1998: 260) dichotomy of *weak* and *strong* partnerships. Information sharing and policy dialogue are elements that represent a weak partnership whereas jointly agreed programmes and guaranteed financial flows are characteristic of strong partnerships.

**Table 4.1: The weak/strong continuum**

Model of partnership	Elements of partnership
Weak	Information sharing Policy dialogue
Strong	Jointly agreed country programmes Multi-annual financial agreements

(Maxwell and Riddell 1998: 260)

Farrington and Lewis (1993: 20) focus explicitly on formal and informal distinctions in partnerships. They expand these distinctions into three dimensions: collaboration, links and interaction. Collaboration in this typology refers to situations where the partnership is formally mandated. Formal and informal interaction is depicted on a continuum between conflict and support.

#### **4.2 Combined frameworks (Demand/supply model dominant):**

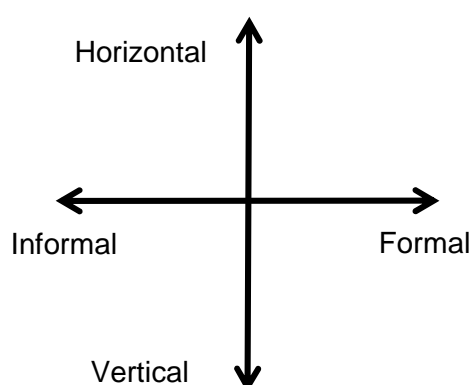
WPA research team; Ullah et al. (2006); Wamai (2004); Davies (2002); Batley (2006); Young (2000); Selsky and Parker (2005)

These seven typologies display characteristics of two theoretical/conceptual frameworks as outlined by Smith and Gronebjerg (2006), with the demand/supply framework providing a more dominant focus of the two. With the exception of the Selsky and Parker typology (demand/supply and civil society/social movement), each typology in this section presents a combination of the demand/supply and regime/neo-

institutional models offered by Smith and Gronebjerg, with its primary focus on rational 'comparative advantage' choices embedded within a particular institutional framework.

The *WPA* research proposal and discussions suggested two main dimensions of relationships between government and NSPs as a starting point to understanding NSP-government relationships: whether the governance of the relationship is more *vertical* (top-down) or *horizontal* (participatory and democratic) and whether the interactions in the relationship rely more on *formal* or *informal* agreements.

**Figure 4.2.1: WPA Mapping Diagram**



Ullah et al. (2006) use a typology continuum from Green and Matthias (1997) to describe relationships between NGOs and the government in terms of increased structure, decreased autonomy and intensified communication starting with competition, progressing through cooperation to coordination and then to collaboration and ending in control. Collaboration is not conceptualised as sub-contracting but rather as 'genuine partnership' characterised by mutual respect and an acceptance of independence on either side. Ullah et al. explain that NGO-government relationships vary from parallel to competitive activities for social sector programmes. They perceive the dynamics of relationships as being affected by policy and legal environment as well as local government structures. The figure below is taken from the Ullah et al. (p. 144) article depicting the competition-control continuum.

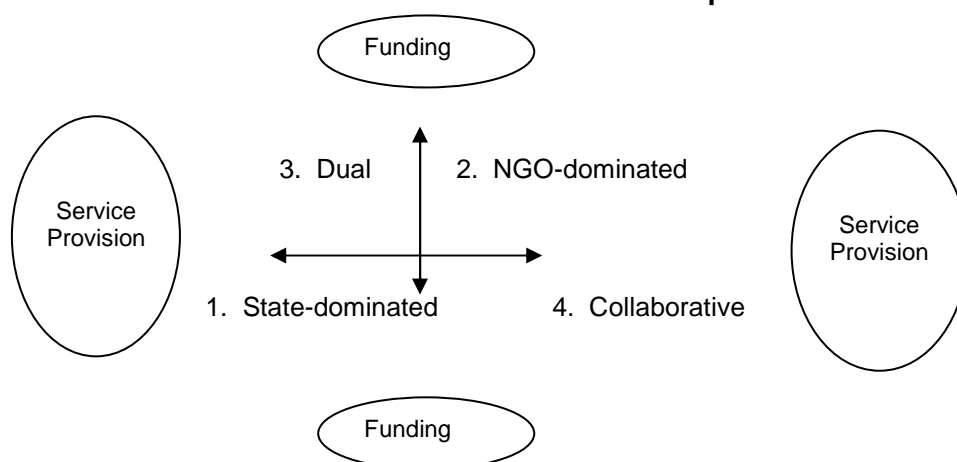
**Figure 4.2.2: The competition-control continuum**



(Ullah et al. 2006:144)

Wamai (2004) proposes a multi-dimensional model of 'state-NGO' relations to demonstrate four scenarios differentiating between levels of power symmetry and two action processes (i.e. funding and service delivery). In the first scenario represented in the model below, the field is dominated by the state in both service delivery and funding. In the second scenario it is NGOs that dominate in both processes. The third and fourth scenarios represent the nature of interactions. In the third (dual) scenario, both the state and NGOs produce services and funding independently. The fourth sphere shows collaborative relations in both funding and service provision. Wamai used this model to represent country differentiations, claiming that Finland and Scandinavian countries generally reflect the first scenario of state dominance, whilst the US, Canada and New Zealand are more in alignment with the second NGO-dominated scenario, the UK and Kenya fit in the third (i.e. dual) scenario and Germany in the fourth (i.e. collaborative) scenario. Although Wamai accepts that this model is overly simplified, he argues that it is useful for initial stages of analysis.

**Figure 4.2.3: Models of state-NGO relations in service production**



(Wamai 2004)

Davies (2002) describes partnership as a mode of governance, distinguishing between three different modes.<sup>21</sup> Each mode of governance offers a different perception of the exercise of power; all three occur at the same time, but through different forms:

- *Governance by government* where local government is the pre-eminent actor in local politics;
- *Governance by partnership* where local partnerships are bureaucratic conduits of government policy.
- *Governance by regime* through local political autonomy, trust and collaborative synergy in sustainable, self-organising networks

Research by Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom (2006) investigated categories of engagement between NSPs and government agencies: policy dialogue of governments with NSPs, regulation and/or facilitation of NSPs, and commissioning of service delivery by NSPs through contracts, licences, partnership, joint venture and co-production. Batley expands upon these categories of engagement to distinguish between:

- Formal and informal policy dialogue;
- Regulation, including by external accreditation, franchise and community control;
- Facilitation by finance, technical advice, training and community mobilisation;
- Contracts or agreements based on loose understandings through formal agreements to tight contracts;
- Relationships that are hierarchical, where one partner acts as the agent of the other, or collaborative in joint ventures or co-production
- Relationships where the NSP is financially autonomous or dependent.

Young (2000) uses a comparative advantage perspective referring to economic theory to support notions of the non-profit sector as *supplementary*, *complementary*, or *adversarial* to government. In the supplementary model, non-profits are seen to fill the gap for public goods not delivered adequately by the government. In the

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<sup>21</sup> Davies (2002) argues that these modes of governance can be examined within different forms of partnerships: *principal/agent relations* (purchaser-provider relationships, contracts); *inter-organisational negotiation* (a bureaucratic partnership in which negotiation and co-ordination between parties lead to a blending of capacities) and *systemic co-ordination* (mutual understanding and embeddedness so that organisations develop a shared vision and joint working leading to the establishment of self-governing networks).

complementary perspective, they are seen as partners, providing basic services financed by the government. In the adversarial view, non-profits encourage government to make changes in public policy and to be accountable. Government also attempts to influence non-profit organisations through regulation and by responding to advocacy. Young argues that the adversarial view does not specify any particular relationship between non-profit and governmental activity. The three perspectives are not mutually exclusive and the boundaries between the government and non-profit are not always apparent.

Selsky and Parker's (2005) typology focuses on the interactions between the NSP and government, using a time-frame delineation between *transaction* and *developmental*. Both time-frames represent partnerships that have been formed to explicitly address social issues. *Transactional* partnerships are short-term and therefore more constrained and largely self-interested. *Developmental* partnerships are longer-term and therefore more open-ended with a more integrative and common-interest orientation.

#### **4.3 Combined frameworks (Civil society/social movement model dominant): Lewis 1997; Skelcher et al. 2005; Welle 2001**

Each of these typologies is most representative of the civil society/social movement model with its emphasis on how social, economic and political structures create complex dynamics over time. The regime/neo-institutional theoretical/conceptual framework is also apparent as comparative institutional aspects exist within the research.

Lewis (1997) differentiates between partnerships that are *active* and *dependent*. This dichotomy is linked to Lewis's (1997; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2006) perception of partnerships as process-orientated, historically and socially contextualised, and evolving. The contrasting characteristics of active and dependent partnerships are outlined and contrasted in the table below (Lewis 1997; 2002: 83).



**Table 4.3: Active and dependent partnerships**

Active partnerships	Dependent partnerships
Process	Blueprint, fixed term
Negotiated, changing roles	Rigid roles based on static assumptions about 'comparative advantage'
Clear purposes, roles and linkages but an openness to change as appropriate	Unclear purposes, roles and linkages
Shared risks	Individual interests
Debate and dissent	Consensus
Learning and information exchange	Poor communication flows
'Activity-based' origins – emerging from practice	Resource-based origins – primarily to gain access to funds

Skelcher et al. (2005) and Welle (2001) use a discourse approach to classifying partnerships.<sup>22</sup> Skelcher et al. differentiate between partnership discourses that are based on *managerialism*, *consociationalism* or *participatory democracy*. The managerial discourse upholds assumptions from the New Public Management placing value on managerial action carried out primarily for effectiveness. *Consociational* discourse is between a coalition of disparate social groups within an elite decision-making structure. Ideological positions are re-defined into technical means-end relationships to reduce the value-conflicts facing the elite group in making collective decision-making. The participatory democracy discourse assumes open co-operation that adheres to principles imbued in collective decision-making.<sup>23</sup>

Welle (2001) examined partnerships involving a local NGO called RuralAid with an international NGO called WaterAid and a contractual arrangement with the local

<sup>22</sup> Skelcher et al. reference Hajer (1995) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) in articulating what they mean by discourse. Discourses are understood as linguistic ensembles of ideas, concepts and causal theories that give meaning to and reproduce ways of understanding the world (Hajer; Chouliaraki and Fairclough). Skelcher et al. use a discourse approach to examine political struggles that surround policy-making. They argue that this approach is highly relevant to the study of partnerships as the language and ideas of partnership suggest co-operative and consensual behaviour, masking significant power inequalities between the actors engaged in partnerships.

<sup>23</sup> In another publication on other research, Skelcher (2004) acknowledges that these discourses are rarely in isolation from each other. Rather they tend to operate within the same space and can therefore lend a hybridity to organisations as well as the relationships they uphold. Skelcher argues that these discourses are typically manifested as a club, agency or polity-forming group. The *club* is typified as a collective enterprise that offers flexible benefits, whereas the *agency* is a creation of government and emerges as a process of functional activities. A *polity-forming* group is created specifically to engage the public in policy formation and delivery through active strategies of participation. In practice groups often exist as hybrids. These discourse and group categories were applied in empirical research on multi-organisational relationships in the USA, UK and European Union in 2003-2004.

government funded by the World Bank. The aim of the study was to use a theoretical and critical approach to understanding how the partners understood and defined 'partnership' and compare these discourses with the dynamics of the partnership and what was actually carried out in practice. Welle located two oppositional discourses of partnership: *solidarity and efficiency*. The *solidarity* discourse of partnership had its roots in the alternative development movement of the 1970s, a 'code word reflecting humanitarian, moral, political ideological or spiritual solidarity between NGOs in the North and South that joined together to pursue a common cause of social change' (Fowler 2000: 1). Both RuralAid and WaterAid approached the partnership with a view of water as a 'social good' and a 'human right'; working together in solidarity, through an informal relationship, to provide better access to water. In contrast, local government's discourse of partnership was that of *efficiency*. The local government position was to provide an enabling environment by ensuring 'sound management' through 'good institutions'. In the efficiency discourse in this case, water was valued as a 'resource to be managed', an 'economic good'. This study suggested a link between discourses of 'partnership' and discourses of 'public action' or social development. Welle argues that partnerships based on a discourse of solidarity are more likely to provide services that are sustainable in the long-term.

#### **4.4 Combined frameworks (Regime/Neo-institutional model dominant): Brinkerhoff 2002; Coston 1998; Najam 2000; Ramanath 2005**

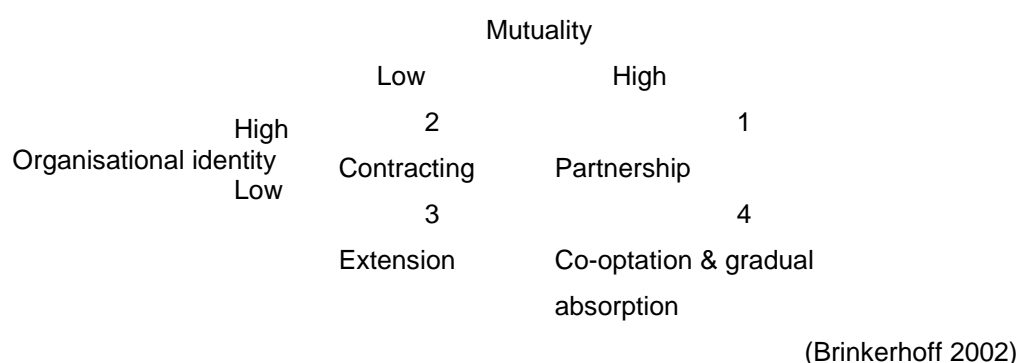
Each of these typologies is most representative of the regime/neo-institutional theoretical/conceptual framework with its comparative research focus on various contextual institutional aspects. In three of the typologies (Brinkerhoff; Coston; Najam), the Demand/supply model is also apparent with its addition focus on the rational 'comparative advantage' choices embedded within a particular institutional framework. Ramanath extends Najam's typology by looking at how the social, economic and political structures create complex dynamics over time, representing the Civil society/social movement model.

Brinkerhoff (2002: 20) develops a multi-dimensional typology that is based on the premise that two 'essential' components must exist for a partnership to exist: *Mutuality* (interdependence and commitment between partners, equality in decision-making and

rights and responsibilities) and *Organisational identity* (the maintenance of each partner's own identity, mission, beliefs, core values and constituencies). The primary driver of a partnership is to access key resources needed to reach objectives. Brinkerhoff argues that an organisation's identity is the foundation for a partnership; if its identity is compromised too strongly, there is likely to be a lessening of legitimacy and effectiveness. This argument is also asserted by Farrington and Bebbington (1993), Fowler (1997), Streeten (1997) and Coston (1998). Brinkerhoff contends that mutuality can reinforce or diminish organisational identity.

Brinkerhoff contrasts the mutuality and identity components of a partnership between NSPs and government with other relationship types: *contracting, extension and gradual absorption or co-optation*. These relationships can simultaneously apply to service delivery and policy advocacy and constituency/beneficiary. Quadrant 1 in the diagram represents partnership: mutuality and organisation identity are maximised (thus this fits with the ideal type). In quadrant 2, the contracted organisation's mission is made to coincide with that of the contractor. In quadrant 3 on extension, one organisation calls all the shots and the other organisation has very little independent identity. Quadrant 4, co-optation and gradual absorption, indicates a long-term loss of organisational identity.

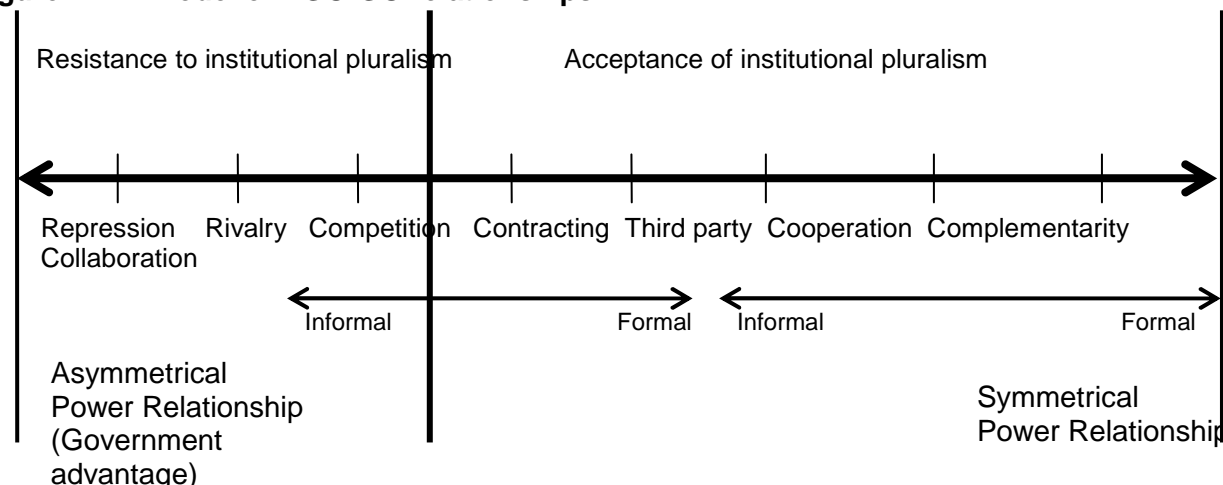
**Figure 4.4.1: Mutuality and identity aspects of partnership**



Coston (1998) sets up a typology of eight alternative relationships situated along a spectrum representing the level of acceptance of pluralism by the government and the level of power symmetry between the government and NSP: *repression, rivalry, competition, contracting, third-party government, cooperation, complementarity and collaboration*. Coston argues that the eight types of relationship should be refined and evaluated to take into account the heterogeneity of relationships; no single type of

relationship is appropriate to most circumstances. The typology pictured and explained below was developed to inform research design for general and rapid assessments carried out in different contexts.

**Figure 4.4.2: Model of NGO-GO relationships**



The three types of relationships on the left of the spectrum represent government reluctance to accept institutional pluralism: *repression*, *rivalry* and *competition*. A blurring of these types is positively perceived as being able to lead to enhanced effectiveness and legitimacy of the state and facilitate its expansion. To the right of the line dividing the eight types, Coston argues that the acceptance of institutional pluralism yields five possible relationships: *contracting*, *third-party government*, *cooperation*, *complementarity* and *collaboration*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Repression*: This type represents the strongest resistance by the state to institutional pluralism; there is no NGO link. An asymmetrical power relationship exists with complete government advantage, both formally and informally. Government policy is unfavourable toward pluralism and there is possible government refusal to provide mandated supportive services. *Rivalry*: This type is closely similar to repression, although space exists for the possibility of a two-way relationship. Repression is viewed as a more extreme manifestation of rivalry. Rivalry can be explained as policies that prohibit and overtly control NGO activities. *Competition*: In this type, the government perceives a threat to its power both politically and economically: Politically, NGOs are seen as unwanted critics of the government and/or competitors for local power and, economically, NGOs are perceived as competing for foreign funding and/or community contributions. *Contracting*: In this type, there is moderate to high linkage between government and NGOs. The government tends to maintain advantage in terms of its power relationship, being the principal of contracts. *Third-party government*: This is an extension of contracting, meaning that there is a greater diversity of interventions such as loan guarantees, insurance and vouchers, etc.. The government raises resources and sets societal priorities whilst private businesses and/or NGOs organise the production of goods and services. *Cooperation*: This exists when there is a greater flow of information, although it is still somewhat controlled by the government; NGOs follow the government's rules and government policy is neutral toward the NGOs. *Complementarity*: This type of relationship is based on comparative advantage where there are degrees of symbiosis and moderate to high NGO linkages with government. NGOs have relative autonomy (greater symmetry in power relationships) and there is potential NGO participation in planning and policy. Complementarity is likely to exist in technical, financial and geographic respects. *Collaboration*: This is similar to complementarity, but there is a higher level of linkage with the government. It is essentially an 'ideal' partnership. NGOs are recognisably autonomous and government policy towards them is favourable. There is NGO participation in planning, policy and implementation. Types of collaboration may result in

Najam (2000) uses similar terms as Coston to distinguish types of relationship between NGOs and government. However, the emphasis is on the interactive space between NGOs and the government. Relationships are determined by the strategic interests of *both* the government and NGO through one or a combination of types that involve both means and ends: *Cooperation* (sharing similar means and ends); *Confrontation* (both means and ends are dissimilar); *Complementarity* (the means differ but the ends are similar); and *Co-optation* (similar means but towards different ends).<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 4.4.3: The four C's of NGO-government relations**

		Goals (Ends)	
		Similar	Dissimilar
Preferred Strategies	Similar	<b>Cooperation</b>	<b>Co-optation</b>
	Dissimilar	<b>Complementarity</b>	<b>Confrontation</b>
(Means)			

partnerships, mutualist strategies and co-production. Coston acknowledges that, in this sense, many believe that authentic collaboration between government and NGOs is impossible.

<sup>25</sup> Najam's typology of four types of relationships are explained in further detail:

*Co-operation*: sharing similar policy goals and strategies for achieving them. Similar terms are used by others (e.g. collaboration and co-production) but with different meanings. For example, Coston uses cooperation and collaboration as different forms of NGO-government relationship but places far more emphasis on power symmetry in collaboration arrangements. However, Najam maintains that the difference between co-operation and collaboration in Coston's representation is difficult to differentiate. In Najam's model, there is a perceived strategical threat on the part of either NGOs or government from the means or ends being pursued by the other in the co-operation category. *Confrontation*: both goals and strategies are antithetical to each other. Najam defines confrontation as encompassing coercive control but also policy defiance and opposition. , and refers to Salamon and Anheier (1999) who argue that there has been an overstatement of the amount of confrontation between NGOs and the state (based on their empirical work on non-profit organisations in 13 countries). *Complementarity*: similar goals but different strategies. Coston (1998) and Young (2000) also have complementarity as one of their categories. Young perceives complementarity as a partnership or contractual relationship in which the government finances public services and nonprofits deliver them. Coston sees complementarity as something similar to symbiosis, 'coexisting to mutual advantage to the point of mutual exploitation'. Najam explains that both Young and Coston restrict the concept to means, where the government pays and the NGOs perform. Najam's model focuses on complementarity as a function of ends (i.e. goals), referring to the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi as an example of a complementary type relationship. *Co-optation*: similar strategies but different goals. Typically the term co-optation is taken as a negative concept, implying government agencies' control of NGOs. Whilst some co-optation relationships move into co-operation, more often the relationship will move toward confrontation. Najam argues for a more balanced connotation of co-optation, emphasising that many NGOs have been influential on governments as well. Through similar choice of means but dissimilar ends, instability is perceived as being likely; one or both parties will attempt to change the goals of the other. The relationship can easily move into confrontation. Najam argues that co-optation is a source of financial, political, coercive or epistemic power.

Najam argues that by understanding these concepts as a matter of strategic choice (i.e. a priority agenda) and explaining them in terms of varying and converging institutional interests, one is more likely to arrive at a relevant and robust understanding of relationships. In contrast, a typology such as Pereira's, which was briefly outlined above, simplifies the relationship. Najam contends that both NGOs and governments are driven by the sectors, politics, reality and rationality of their institutional interests and priorities. This reflects Brinkerhoff's emphasis on organisational identity. Najam's model does not take sides in comparing the advantages of one organisation over the other, but rather focuses on the strategic interests driving the NSP and the government to be in the relationship. Although tensions exist between NGOs and government, both sets of actors realise fundamental benefits from the partnership. Najam's relationship types are not mutually exclusive; there might be both co-operative and confrontational relationships at the same time, within the same relationship. This is supported in empirical research carried out by Sood and Ramanath. Najam's model acknowledges Fisher's (1998) claim about the 'schizophrenic nature of NGO-government relations' and is based on the premise that neither NGOs nor the government are monolithic. Both Najam and Coston view advocacy as a function of NGO-government relations, either as part of or rivalling the overall relationship.

Ramanath uses Najam's Four C's model in her study of NGO-government relations in housing and squatter policies in Mumbai. However, Ramanath used typology as a tool for the initial stages of analysis on the basis of which to build a more nuanced and robust description of NGO-government relations. Ramanath (2005: 12) argues that, although useful, 'typological classification only scratches the surface of tensions that characterise NGO-GO interactions'. To get beneath the surface, she created a 'repertoire of tactics' approach, based on the assumption that, although similar goals maybe perceived (i.e. Najam's complementarity type), different strategic means are used to advance the organisation's interests.

## 5.0 Conclusion: Ways forward

How does one best navigate the myriad of typologies, theories and methods in the complex constellation of NSP-government relationships? Perhaps it is best to start with what we know about them. We know the normative view of NSP-government relationships, the reified boundaries between the market, third sector and the state that establish these relationships and that they are seen more as a 'good thing' than not because of their assumed comparative advantages.<sup>26</sup> However, we also know, or at least are becoming more aware, that these normative assumptions barely scratch the surface of the complexities of how these relationships evolve and exist in reality. We are also becoming more aware that there are a multitude of issues that are both in conflict and collaboration with each other at any given time, but that also these issues change over time in nuanced and observable ways, regulating the dynamics of the relationship.

Already in 1989, Bratton, one of the first to research relationships between non-state providers (NSPs) and government, argued that,

At base, the relationship between governments and non-governmental organizations is a political question that impinges on the legitimacy of various types of institutions to exercise power. (Bratton 1989: 570)

When contrasted with recent research approaches, the quote from Bratton is telling in that it prioritises what needs to be researched when examining NSP-government relationships. The quality and dynamics of NSP-relationships have much to do with the *political* and *institutional* context through which the individuals within these organisations are operating, how *legitimate* they are in the eyes of others (particularly those in corresponding and clashing networks) and the various ways in which *power*

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<sup>26</sup> Hilhorst (2003), Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006) and Seckinelgin (2006) have all articulated the tendency for an 'NGO-centrism' within NSP-government research. Seckinelgin explains that NGO-centrism establishes an over-generalised perspective based on an 'ideal type' view of NGOs and their relationships. Sanyal (1994) claims that the problem with the comparative advantage approach is that it has a normative orientation. It prescribes how institutions should act and interact rather than explaining how they actually act in practice. Najam (2000) argues that the question of what types of strategies can be adopted by each type of institution to achieve cooperation and autonomy cannot be answered adequately by relying only on theories of comparative advantage.

is exercised, both visibly and invisibly. However, more often than not, these concepts such as 'political', 'institutional', 'legitimacy' and 'power' are not integrated and explicitly taken into account within theoretical and methodological frameworks when undertaking research on NSP-government relationships.

Sanyal (1994) argued there was a need to better understand the *dialectic of incorporation and autonomy* of actors within NSP-government relationships. Sanyal suggested that research should investigate three phases in the institutional development of successful NGO: their origin, growth and expansion and post-success phase. In each phase it is necessary to probe the nature of linkages/distances between the NGO and the government, how they are created and how they have impacted particularly on the NGOs internal operation. *For example, has there been a balance between incorporation and autonomy? How has this balance changed over time? What kind of obstacles has it faced in striking a balance? How was balanced retained?* Sanyal explained it is also important to understand the relationship between NGOs and the market, the relationship between NGOs and different political parties (asking for example, what do NGOs do to receive strategic political support without committing themselves to a political party?) and the relationship between NGOs and organised labour (i.e. between trade unions of formal sector workers and NGOs that have attempted or organised urban or rural informal sector workers). Sanyal's points address the particular significance of the issues of time, internal dynamics and boundaries.

In the earlier working paper on key issues of NSP-government relationships (Teamey and McLoughlin 2008) Lewis's (2008) research on the life-work histories was briefly described, highlighting the fluidity of the boundaries between civil society and the state and the value of gaining an in-depth understanding of the background of individuals within relationships. Lewis (p. 125) demonstrates that 'while it may be analytically convenient to separate the three sectors, the realities are far more complex.' In addition to outlining individuals' motivations and identity changes as time goes on, Lewis explains that employing methodological tools of life-work history research opens up further 'understandings of institutional geographies of power and choice among individuals whose careers have cut across boundaries of the third sector and the public sector and the complex and elusive nature of this boundary' (p. 138).



Rao and Smyth (2005) indicate that the key problem in partnership discourse is that it disguises the fact that power differences exist and inequality is not eradicated, or at least shifted, without conflict. They also state that partnership discourse mirrors social capital discourse as each tends to depoliticise and de-contextualise development by ignoring power relations between different groups (i.e. the broader range of stakeholders, including central and local government, community, voluntary groups and private sector organisations). With these shortcomings in mind, Rao and Smyth recommend that research on NSP-government partnerships should acknowledge differences in power and resources among various actors. They argue that unequal power relations are always prevalent in any partnership, in spite of any common vision. Hastings (1999), Matlin (2001) and Rao and Smyth (2005) all claim that there is a need to go beyond simply charting how partners have perceived their experiences to examining the processes that actually occur, particularly in relation to power dynamics. Matlin argues that questions such as the following must be asked:

What rules in practice govern the relationship? How does the asymmetry of power (particularly related to funding influences) exert a determining influence on who controls the process of the relationship?

Lewis et al. (2003) explain that to understand the workings of power within a relationship, empirical work that engages with the concept of power is essential. Power dynamics and relationships within and between organisations and associated actors should be taken into account. Lewis et al. explain that the values and meanings that become dominant in a development project is largely a question of balance of power among different interest groups in and surrounding the organisations that are implementing the programmes. This is a central theme in critical development anthropology and organisational studies. Atkinson (1999) also argues for the value of analysing the assumptions behind different uses of 'partnership' and 'empowerment' in development rhetoric; their usage is an exercise of power and so has influence on the dynamics of NSP-government relationships.

The ways in which these power relationships are ultimately worked out and the routes through which particular meanings come to prominence, is an empirical question. This means tracing project histories carefully, charting the interactions among different

agencies, the values and meanings prioritised and struggled for by groups within each agency and the ebbs and flows of particular meanings regarding the purpose to which project resources are directed. Tvedt (2002: 365-366) further explains:

The main challenge to NGO research at this stage, then, is not to develop grand theories or develop another aspirational project, but to develop research designs that are able to analytically integrate both the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the NGO scene (in political, religious, institutional and financial terms), its political role(s) and potential(s) within and agency/structure perspective, and at the same time to identify more systemic conflicts affecting the arena – both externally and internally.

Several publications emphasised that issues of context, history and power should be merged and prioritised in research studies on NSP-government relationships. For example, Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006) argue that in critical writings on NGOs, there is a lack of attention to detail and the specifics of power, history and context. Selsky and Parker (2005) explain that little attention has been paid to the underlying institutional dynamics, including power and political dimensions that set the stage for the way social issues are defined and worked out within relationships. They argue that closer examination of the distribution and balance of power within both partnerships and their historical contexts is needed. White (1999) makes a case for focusing on the local context in any 'adequate' analytical framework through careful exploration into what works and why, what is and what is not realistic according to cultural, social and institutional conditions.

Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2002) argue that 'as relationships evolve and change, they should be understood as processes and analysed as such' (see also Lewis et al. 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Selsky and Parker 2005). Yet, in the literature on NSP-government relationships, there is a tension between those who address relationships as a matter for polemical or theoretical speculation and those who empirically analyse them. Cho and Gillespie (2006) contend that, although relationships evolve, 'the empirical studies attempting to identify mechanisms governing the government-nonprofit relationship are essentially static' (Cho and Gillespie p. 494). Typologies are useful only as an initial window rather than as a reductionist and simplified end to understand and explain relationships. Ramanath (2005: 157), in her study of three

NSP-government relationships in Mumbai, explains more fully:

In a relationship crowded with the use of contentious tactics, one is tempted to locate NHSS's [i.e. an NGO in Mumbai] interactions, with the government, neatly and squarely in the box Najam [2000] labels 'confrontation'. However, this case challenges such a simplistic classification and calls for relationships to be viewed as evolving processes rather than as interactions with clear and consistent characterizations. Organizations with high-profile members, like the NHSS, are under constant pressure to prove their mettle, to translate their highly publicized agendas into deliverables. Faced with a government that was unwilling to concede to its demands, NHSS reconsidered its tactical position and chose the next best option of compromise

In order to fully understand the process of an NSP-government relationship, it is important to closely examine its beginning stages and characteristics (Sanyal 1994; Krishna 2003; Pettigrew 2003). Krishna (p. 362) argues that 'much more work is required to assess the range of background conditions, design principles and evolutionary patterns that can help produce abiding institutional linkages.'

Sanyal, Najam and Ramanath each argue the importance of analysing the strategies adopted and carried out by the institution on each side of the relationship. What this means for a research strategy is that for every NGO whose strategies we may want to understand, we must also analyse how the policies of the governments with which it has interacted emerged and impact on the NGO. Therefore, there must always be two parts to any research design on this topic, one focusing on the NGO, its leaders and the strategies they have adopted to create institutional linkages as well as distances, and the other focusing on government officials and their motivation and strategies for cooperating with or maintaining autonomy from NGOs. Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006: 670) claim similarly:

There is a growing recognition of a challenge among researchers for the study of NGOs to move into a new phase that will both keep abreast of changing policy in relation to NGO practices and do justice to the complexity and diversity of NGO forms and contexts.

Bouget and Prouteau (2005) claim that little research is devoted to analysing how an NGO manages its various roles, and particularly the twin roles of advocate and service deliverer. Dorman (2001) and Pettigrew (2003) both argue that there is a need for NGOs to be examined 'from the inside' so as to generate deep description and capture the dynamics of internal decision-making processes. Dorman contends that research on NGOs that focuses only on some NGO staff, without considering whether they are representative of the NGO as a whole and the process by which any discontent is voiced, may understate levels of internal conflict and misunderstand NGOs and their various relationships, including with government. Hilhorst (2003) claims that little research has focused on analysing the everyday reality of NGO work, particularly in managing relations with government agencies in shifting policy environments. She argues that there is a divorce between the literature on NGO performance and efficiency and the literature on cultural and identity politics of individuals working within NGOs. Both have strengths and need to be connected if we are to understand NGOs and their multiple relationships.

Lewis et al. (2003) argue that ethnographic studies of organisations are needed to gain a better understanding of the micro effects of globalisation on organisations. Pereira (2005) argues there is a need for a systematic assessment of the impact of globalisation upon the nature of governmental and non-governmental structures. For example, Pereira explains that further research is needed to understand local manifestations of global processes of decentralisation, economic liberalisation and democratisation that are transforming the landscape of Latin American NGOs and their linkages with government structures.

Scott (1985: xv) in the preface of his book on ethnographies of peasant resistance states;

The limitations of any field of study are most strikingly revealed in its shared definitions of what counts as relevant.

Although this quote comes from a publication outside of the literature on NSP-government relationships, it is helpful to situate and create further research questions, theories and methods that can better address the complexities of NSP-government relationships. There is a *significant lack* of shared relevance, shared understanding

and sense of legitimacy as to how NSP-government relationships are understood and can be better understood through more appropriate research across different disciplines. This shared lack inspires several imperative and inter-linked questions: *What are the most important questions that need to be asked and how should they be addressed to get at the contextual complexities of NSP-government relationships? What are the contextual differences between formal and informal modes of communication? What are the boundaries of the field(s) in terms of where NSP-government relationships are situated and how should they be most appropriately researched? How can knowledge be better shared and combined through theory and practice, particularly through continued innovation in technological advances (i.e communication modes and means)? Whose theories and methods are dominating the research agenda and which alternatives are useful?*

As demonstrated in the earlier working paper (Teamey and McLoughlin) and this working paper, the boundaries of the inter-secting fields and sectors (civil society, government, market, academic, practice, organisations and institutions) need *not* to be viewed as static, but instead as fluid, with moving boundaries that are both material and non-material (conceptual, ideological, financial, political, cultural, etc.) according to a given context. Each of the conceptual/theoretical models offered by Smith and Gronebjerg (2006) are useful, but are arguably far more useful when combined rather than being applied in isolation. The complexity of relationships should be understood through research approaches that are equally mirrored in their complexity, with combined and innovative methods and theories that place primary importance on context, history, power and institutional frameworks.

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