The “R”s of REGIONAL COLLABORATION*

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1. Introduction
Collaboration is now a ubiquitous phenomenon. A cursory browsing of literature pertaining to such diverse issue areas as environment, education, human services, and urban renewal would reveal that the use of partnerships, networks, or otherwise collaborative arrangements in these and similar other fields is growing exponentially. The following terms, all point to, in one way or another, the changing nature of governance: “interorganizational relationships”, “interorganizational innovations”1, “interorganizational partnerships”2, “cooperative interorganizational relationships”, “multi-organizational partnerships”3, “multi-agency partnerships”4, “collaborating”, “interagency collaboration”5 “multi-community collaborative organizations”6, “multi-stakeholder collaboration”7, “sustainability collaboration”8, “strategic collaboration”9, “collaborative governance”10, “collaborative advantage”11, “collaboration practice”12 “social partnerships”13, “network partnerships”14, “networks”15 “collaborative networks”16 “network paradigm”17, “network management”18 “policy networks”19.

* We must acknowledge that in assembling the information and ideas contained in this paper, we extensively draw upon two previous works:

1 See, for example, Oliver, 1990.
2 See, for example, Mandell and Steelman, 2003.
3 See, for example, Thacher, 2004.
4 See, for example, Ring and Van de Ven, 1994.
5 See, for example, Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998.
6 See, for example, Milbourne, Macne, and Maguire, 2003.
7 See, for example, Gray, 1989.
8 See, for example, Bardach, 2001.
9 See, for example, Cigler, 1999.
10 See, for example, Everett and Jamal, 2004.
11 See, for example, Fadeeva, 2004.
12 See, for example, Austin, 2000.
13 See, for example, Freeman, 1997.
14 See, for example, Kanter, 1994.
15 See, for example, Huxham, 2003.
16 See, for example, Waddock, 1989.
17 See, for example, Hudson, 2004.
18 See, for example, Bogason and Toonen, 1998.
19 See, for example, Nightingale, 2004.
20 See, for example, Borgatti and Foster, 2003.
21 See, for example, Agrawal and McGhee, 2001.
22 See, for example, Marsh and Smith, 2000.

In fact, the four developments anticipated and discussed by Dwight Waldo (1974) some thirty years ago have increasingly becoming realities of today. First, while hierarchical organization and its many attentive features are still recognizable in the way many societal functions and institutions are organized within and across different nations, there has also been a move away from hierarchical and centralized organizational models to horizontal and decentralized ones across many different countries. Starting with the matrix, there is now a long list of organizational forms, such as cluster, cellular, and virtual, all of which point to the increased use of cross-functional/cross-departmental forms of organizing within and across different organizations. In the words of Parsons (1998: 87), in many issue areas, “hierarchy gives way to heterarchy.” Second, the use of various forms of partnerships that bring together organizations from different sectors (i.e., public, private, and non-profit) has become more widespread than ever before. Public-private partnerships have emerged as a new tool or method of addressing important societal concerns and delivering services through the collaborative efforts and thus the combined strengths of organizations and individuals from multiple sectors. Third, there is a growing realization of the complexities of interorganizational alliances and networks as well as the challenges and opportunities they present in the functioning of many public, private, and nonprofit organizations. Put differently, in many issue areas, “iron cages give way to plastic nets or,….bureaucratization gives way to…filetisation and bureaucracy gives way to filetarchy.” Finally, with recent trends toward globalization, the number and importance of ‘supra-, multi-, or transnational organizations’ (e.g., the United Nations, the European Union, the NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, multi-national corporations and multi-national nongovernmental organizations) have increased tremendously.

All these developments call our attention to, among others, an overarching challenge. It relates to the question of how to manage effectively interdependencies existing within as well as between organizations, sectors, regions, and nations. In other words, as such interdependencies become increasingly salient and important in the functioning of many different types of organizations, so are the importance of policies and processes aiming to manage them effectively.

In this sense, regional development is no exception. The number, scope and influence of regional collaborative arrangements have increased at a fascinating rate in the last decade, particularly within the array of EU regional policies and programs. It has long been argued that collaborative forms of governance can enhance the ability of regions to establish and/or maintain their comparative and competitive advantage(s). While there has been a surge in the number of studies examining various aspects of partnerships and networks formed in regional policy making and implementing, there is still considerable need for research on which to base informed conclusions regarding the most critical factors affecting the performance of multi-level, multi-sectoral, and multi-organizational collaborative arrangements. Besides, practitioners from all three sectors are increasingly being asked to involve in different types of collaborative projects or programs, but they often lack a concise guide to utilize in planning, designing, and evaluating such initiatives.

The current paper thus aims to provide both scholars and practitioners with an “analytical tool”, or a “checklist” of sort to think thoroughly the critical determinants of “collaborative performance” as well as the most appropriate

22 See, for example, Armstrong, Wells, and Woolford, 2003.
23 See, for example, Davoudi, 2003.
24 See, for example, Rischard, 2002-03.
25 See, for example, Rhodes, 1997.
26 See, for example, Hax and Wilde, 2001.
27 See, for example, O’Toole, 1997.
28 See, for example, Ansell, 2000.
29 See, for example, Klijn, 2002.
30 Parsons, 1998: 91, from French word ‘filet’, or net; emphasis in original.
31 For more information on the topic, along with appropriate references, see, Acar, 2001: 1-5.
criteria for evaluating it. It must be clarified at the outset that performance in regional collaboration should be treated as a complex phenomenon reflecting the interplay of multiple actors and factors. Nonetheless, we make no claim for being exhaustive in listing and evaluating the factors that in one way or another affect performance in and of regional collaborative arrangements. In the next section, we will identify and discuss, albeit with varying degrees of detail and depth, the following as the most critical, or major issues affecting the performance in and of regional collaborative undertakings: Rationales, Roadmaps, Rules, Roles, Responsibilities, Relationships, Resources, Risks, Rewards, and Reviews. We will conclude the paper with a brief summary.

2. Ten Rs of collaborative performance

Our main argument is such that ten issues, or factors identified and discussed in this section, taken together, constitute most critical, or major elements of many different types of collaborative arrangements. In other words, depending upon how they are dealt with, these ten components, by and large, might determine the shape and content of the debate about collaborative performance. However, we do not mean to present them as “independent variables” affecting outcome—or “dependent variable”—of collaborative arrangements since some of these components can easily be put on either side of performance equation. For instance, “risks”, may be thought of as an input, a component of collaboration process, and an outcome of collaboration, depending upon the purpose the analysis/analyst. What we mean is that these ten issues, or factors are fairly representative of the issues, or concerns identified in the literature pertaining to interorganizational collaboration, if not reflecting particularly the literature on regional collaboration. It must also be noted that while the ordering of the ten issues below reflects in part the belief that many collaboratives develop through fairly identifiable steps, or stages, no assumption about “linearity” is made. For the emergent and ever-evolving nature of organizing exhibited in many collaboratives would prevent us from relying on such unwarranted claims about linearity, or orderly progress. A final caution should be noted here: An extensive coverage of the ten major factors affecting collaborative performance, as well as their relations and interactions with each other, will be left for another work. In other words, rest of this section will be devoted to identifying and briefly describing the ten factors, along with exemplary questions that can be raised about each and every one of these ten factors.

Rationales

The number one issue to be raised with regard to any collaborative initiative relates to reasons or rationales: Why is the collaboration created—at least attempted—in the first place in an environment where the existence of autonomous organizations functioning along the sectoral, jurisdictional and/or organizational lines is still the rule. Previous research has identified a number of reasons/rationales for formation of different types of collaborative arrangements. One of them is the emergence of a disaster. For instance, natural disasters affecting a region as a whole would fasten the creation of temporary alliances among organizations and individuals representing different sectors of a given region. Not all collaboratives, however, come to the existence as a result of such dramatic conditions. In some cases, the presence of a law or otherwise compulsory arrangements can facilitate the first steps toward collaboration. For instance, certain legal mandates and policy measures in a country, including those promulgated by European Union programs, can prompt the creation of new collaborative arrangements. While the existence of mandates may create “necessary conditions” for regional cooperation, they alone may not be “sufficient” to propel all actors into collaborative arrangements. Additional reasons other than occurrence of dramatic disasters and the existence of legal/administrative mandates must explain the emergence of many types of interorganizational collaborative endeavors. According to Hudson (2004: 78-80), “the rationale for (and hence the attractiveness of) networks as a mode of organizing and governance is threefold: An effective response to the predictive contingencies for co-ordination; access to rich, localized information; and enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.” Oliver (1990), on the other hand, identifies and discusses six reasons as to why interorganizational partnerships might be established: necessity; asymmetry; reciprocity; efficiency; stability; and legitimacy.

34 See, for example, Cigler, 1999.
35 See, for example, Waddock, 1989
36 A distinction can be made between “macro” reasons that give rise to collaborative forms of organizing in general, and “micro” reasons that make certain organizations or groups more willing to enter into specific forms/types of collaboration. However, this is not a place to go into details on the topic. For more information on this, see, Acar, 2004. For more information about different theoretical explanations of reasons, or rationales for interorganizational relations in various contexts, see also, Barringer and Harrison, 2000; Guo and Acar, 2005; Leibovitz, 2003.
All in all, the existence of interdependencies and common interests among otherwise autonomous organizational actors is, by and large, the most frequently mentioned factor in the literature to explain the emergence of interorganizational alliances and partnerships. A perceived, or real fiscal distress on the part of some organizations, for instance, may help those interdependencies and common interests across organizations/sectors/jurisdictions become more visible. A case can be made, however, that mutual interdependencies and interests may remain as mere potentials without conscious and concerted efforts of some pioneering individuals and/or organizations to make them “salient,” or “manifested”. In other words, for collaboration to be started, some individuals and/or organizations have to recognize interdependencies and common interests first. Such pioneering individuals are interchangeably called as “policy entrepreneur”, “social entrepreneur”, and “convener”. Not only do they recognize the existing interdependencies and common interests, but also they do start communicating the need for collaboration to others in their environments on the intent of enlisting, or recruiting some initial support and supporters for their cause.

It is needless to say that there must exist good reasons for any organization to join others in regional collaboration. Attempts toward collaboration for the sake of collaboration would not help the participants achieving tangible and sustainable outcomes. Although the specifics of the rationales might vary across different types of partnerships, the idea remains the same: Good reasons must trigger collaborative initiatives. Organizations and community groups should raise the following questions before initiating or joining into collaborative forms of organizing:

- Is collaboration only, or a better way of doing things?
- What kinds of rationales do exist for joint efforts and decisions?
- What are the political, economic, and/or organizational bases for collaboration?
- What alternatives do exist in terms of choosing among various types of collaboration?
- How and by whom the rationales are identified, and communicated to the stakeholders?

Roadmaps

Regional collaboration involves purposive acts of participating individuals and institutions. The term ‘roadmaps’ is used here to point to the need for doing some planning at the very beginning of the partnerships and alliances. The main idea is such that although it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify all the contingencies in advance, it is still necessary to do some planning. It involves but goes beyond general planning of collaborative actions and decisions. It includes envisioning main phases of collaborative activities and achievements. It is for sure that a certain degree of flexibility and an ‘expect the unexpected’ kind of attitude needs to be maintained in regional collaboration. It is simply because collaborative arrangements are fragile, more so than more stable, hierarchical organizing, due to their emergent nature and the complexity of the problems they are attempting to solve. Nonetheless, there is a solid need for at least outlining the basics of where the founders/participants want to go, and what they want to achieve. In short, roadmaps are putting forward a relatively broad yet achievable targets, and clarifying the main roads toward those targets, as well as the speed and deadlines to reach them.

The broadly-defined mission(s) and goal(s) that cause the participants come together around the same table during an early phase, should be turned into specific plans, programs, and/or projects during the subsequent phase. In other words, it is no longer possible for the entrepreneurs to ride onto broad-based statement of missions and visions. As with the single organizational units, development of challenging yet attainable goals for a collaborative arrangement can motivate and energize its participants. Yet, too much expectation and the lack of a realistic agenda may result in collective breakdowns. Thus, reaching early on an agreement on the expected results of collaborative efforts, may it be a single goal, or a set of goals, may prove crucial for the effectiveness of collaborative endeavors. Phasing-out

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37 See, for example, Cigler, 1999; Gray, 1989; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Waddock, 1989.
38 See, for example, Cigler, 1999.
39 See, for example, Cigler, 1999; Gray, 1989; Waddock, 1989.
40 To use an analogy, we may not need to know all small streets and turns in an area, but we should give the drivers and passengers a map that shows the main highways and essential streets around.
plans and/or programs into carefully designed and collectively decided timelines would increase the chances for success in regional collaboration.41

In sum, collaborative performance depends in part on whether and how the founders or leaders value the planning, as well as how effectively the missions and expectations of collaboration are articulated and phased out. In terms of clarifying the term roadmaps as used here, the following questions can be put forward:

- What are the main missions and purposes of collaboration?
- How well are the general purposes and aims turned into specific programs, or projects?
- What are main developmental stages or phases of collaborative arrangements?
- Are there any significant deadlines, as well as with some timetables for major activities?
- How well are the missions, programs, targets, deadlines, and timetables adjusted with each other?

Rules

Starting with the rules of engagement and negotiation, members of partnerships and networks should develop a set of rules to govern their relations with each other and with the collaborative. Rules employed in a collaborative can be formal, as in the case of contracts and memoranda of understanding, as well as informal in the form of verbal agreements, tacit cultural and professional norms. While public sector in many cases is in a unique position to generate formal rules pertaining to different aspects of networks and partnerships, there is no guarantee that such-generated rules will be easily accepted and/or be frequently observed by all participants.

According to Mandell and Steelman (2003: 212), formal rules can be laid down by those in the collaborative arrangement in a more horizontal form of joint coordination (e.g., Federal Regional Councils), or by a third party such as a government entity in a vertical system (e.g., Manpower Training Systems), or by a foundation providing grant monies. While much would depend, among other things, on the characteristics of the task(s) undertaking by a partnership, the leader(s) of the collaborative should find ways of utilizing carefully mixed set of formal and informal norms and expectations to guide and monitor the actions of its members. Ultimately, a balance should also be struck between the flexibility and innovation on one hand, and stability and accountability on the other.

The argument developed by Dicke and Ott (1999) in relation to human services contracting, can also be said to apply to many types of collaborative arrangements. Dicke and Ott (1999) have convincingly argued that written contracts between government agencies and contractors should be thought of as treaties rather than instrument of control. They submit that:

“Treaties are political-legal frameworks that establish rights and obligations and that provide boundaries within which there is space to maneuver and experiment. (…) Treaties provide mechanisms for the parties to adapt to a changing environment, communicate altered expectations, and modify their behaviors based on their learning—an approach favorable for both flexibility and innovation.” (p. 513)42

The following questions are fairly representative of the concerns regarding the importance and effectiveness of the rules in the functioning and performance of regional collaboration:

- What kinds of rules, regulations, and/or guidelines do a collaboration need most?
- How and by whom the rules and norms of collaborative actions and decisions are developed?
- How is the hierarchy of norms/rules dealt with during collaborative processes?
- How well and with what frequency the existing rules are observed and enforced?
- Is there a balance between flexibility and innovation vs. stability and accountability?

Rules

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41 For more information on “developmental”, or “evolutionary” models of interorganizational collaboration, see, for example, Acar, 2004; Gray, 1989; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Waddock, 1989.
Roles refer to the parts played by participant organizations and individuals in the governing and production processes of the collaborative. They involve both formal and informal ones. Roles are as much reflection of partners’ expectations from one another and from the collaborative as they are means for partners to communicate these expectations with one another and the environment. At a minimum, the leaders of the collaborative should do their best to make this process as an effective tool to create a genuine and ongoing dialogue between its members and between the collaborative and its environment. Also important to note is the dynamic, if not chaotic, nature that roles may exhibit in collaborative endeavors, given the diversity and complexity of the roles that may be played by various actors “inside” and “outside” of the collaborative: Initiating, enlisting, match-making, networking, sponsoring, communication, consensus-making, motivating, decision-making, trouble-shooting, and promoting-marketing and so on.

In an ideal world, all the roles needed for effective functioning of a collaborative would be known in advance and there would be someone to fulfill each and every one of these roles. In reality, however, both the types of roles needed for effective functioning of partnerships and the individuals and organizations acting in those roles change frequently, sometimes abruptly, due largely to permeable boundaries of partnerships, and the fluid nature of participation in and around them. Collaborative endeavors are also very much prone to different types of role conflicts. For instance, conflict can occur between the role(s) of the collaborative and the role(s) of one of participating organizations. It may exhibit the characteristics of “turf battle,” or “jurisdictional conflict.” Role conflicts may also occur between two or more participating organizations. Such conflict stem from the fact that regional collaboration sometimes bring together organizations, which are otherwise competitors outside the collaborative in one or more areas. While there is no quick remedy for this kind of role conflict, members of a collaborative can try to reduce it by clearly drawing the boundaries of cooperation and competition as much as possible. For overall performance of any collaboration would inevitable be affected by how well participants address and resolve the conflict(s), including those stemming from role conflicts.

Another issue worth noting is the ambiguous and emergent nature of the roles in partnerships and networks. In collaborative arrangements, we are more likely to see role making instead of role taking since it is difficult to talk about the existence of any number of “fixed” roles that can easily be associated with particular organizations and individuals in a stable and consistent manner. This can create additional challenges for those individuals who are accustomed to orderly world of hierarchical organizations where by and large everybody knows his/her place and roles.33 The best can the people involved in a collaborative do, then, is to strive for alleviating the negative consequences of role conflicts by creating processes and mechanisms that are most congruent with organizing properties of alliances and networks. The questions below are meant to cover major dimensions of a debate about roles in collaborative arrangements:

- What are the types and nature of major roles needed during collaboration?
- How and by whom those roles are identified and assigned, or assumed?
- Is there a fairly satisfactory, if not perfect, match between the roles and the players assigned to them?
- How do/should the major roles and players change over time?
- What can be /have been done to solve/alleviate the problems stemming from role conflicts?

Responsibilities
Responsibilities refer to the processes and means of identifying, monitoring, and enforcing the parts played by individuals and organizations involved in collaborative endeavors. To a certain degree, clarifying respective roles early on would help ease the tensions about responsibilities later on. Furthermore, creating mechanisms and tools for monitoring the agreement(s) and ensuring compliance help minimizing the risk of potential individual or organizational “free riding,” which is not so uncommon in collective endeavors. It should be always kept in mind, however, that partnerships at times might present with their members and sponsors with significant challenges in so far as responsibilities of its members are concerned. Part of this challenge stems from the fact that collaborations embody the characteristics of “commons.” Adding to this challenge is the requirement of transcending the traditional

33 For more information and debate on the topic, see, for example, Mandell, 1994; Robertson and Acar, 1999; Smithmier, 1996.
boundaries of public and private when it comes to separate and joint accountability of actors involved in public-private partnerships, which require in turn negotiated compromises.\textsuperscript{44}

As Robertson and Acar (1999: 28) have observed: “The voluntary and often temporary nature of these systems, the lack of a hierarchical administrative structure, and differences in the goals, values, power, and commitment of the participants all conspire to reduce the efficacy of traditional accountability mechanisms.” There is no quick remedy, or one-size-fits-all type of solution for the issue of responsibilities in collaborative endeavors. One would only hope that the increased openness and an ongoing debate will bring public, private, and/or nonprofit organizations acting together in partnerships to a better understanding of each other’s separate and joint responsibilities as well as how to define, address, and enforce them.

The following questions are fairly representative of the concerns regarding responsibilities in the functioning and performance of regional collaboration:

- Who are major individual and institutional actors that have responsibilities in regional development?
- How have responsibilities of those actors been identified and expressed in a regional collaboration?
- How and by whom the actors might be encouraged to assume and act upon their responsibilities?
- How do/should the major responsibilities and players assume them change over time?
- How might collaboratives address and alleviate best “the free-riding problem”?

\textbf{Resources}

The sixth major issue relates to resources. Identifying and effectively mobilizing across sectors and organizations the resources needed for collective action constitutes one of the most important challenges collaborators have to meet successfully on their way to achieve their purposes. In fact, it is the reason deare for the creation of partnerships in many issue areas. In the area of local economic development and urban regeneration, for instance, public-private partnerships have said to be formed chiefly as a response to declining financial resources of government organizations to meet ever growing demands for public services under declining budgets. Similarly, many partnerships between business and public schools are formed, in the first place, to attract monetary resources and materials from the former to the latter.\textsuperscript{45} The performance of collaborative arrangements thus should be evaluated in the light how effective their members are vis-a-vis resource acquisition. As Agranoff and McGuire (1999: 28) stated: “The ability to tap the skills, knowledge, and resources of others is a critical component of networking capacity.”\textsuperscript{46}

While of significant importance, financial resources are not the only resources that one should be concerned with securing. Attracting best quality human resources possible, including paid professional(s) is also important for regional collaboration to prevent what Cigler (1999) has called “voluntary burnout” (i.e., time, energy, or otherwise pressures and constraints felt pioneers of the collaborative enterprise). Not only the process of getting resources, but also the issue of how effective these resources have been employed by the collaborative should be of concern to their members and supporters. It may prove to be very daunting a task to say with exact precision whether given resources can be better utilized by collaboratives, instead of single organizations. Nonetheless, performance evaluation in and of collaborative arrangements should be concerned with whether the resources have been effectively utilized, underutilized or misused.

The following are sample questions that members and sponsors of a collaborative endeavor might raise in relation to the issue of resources in regional collaboration:

- What are the types and amount of resources needed most to make collaboration a reality?
- How and by whom those resources might be identified, committed, and secured?
- What is the distribution of resources committed to collaboration by the type of sources/sponsors?
- How effective are the founders and leaders of a collaborative in mobilizing and utilizing resources?
- How the sustainability of both resources and collaboration can be maintained over time?

\textsuperscript{44} For more information and debate on the topic, see, for example, Acar and Robertson, 2004; Freeman, 1997; Gray, 1989.

\textsuperscript{45} For a more detailed treatment of resources in multi-organizational/multi-sectoral partnerships and networks, see, Acar, 2004: 130-134.

\textsuperscript{46} See, also, Agranoff, 2003; Agranoff and McGuire, 2001.
Risks
Another major issue concerning regional collaboration has to do with the risks involved in initiating, planning, designing, and executing collaborative projects or programs. For example, it is the risks associated with the concept of “entrepreneur” that makes the redrawing of boundaries between the public and private subject of continuing and passionate a debate among scholars and practitioners of public administration. As the parties to this debate would eagerly tell us, partnerships at times can be very risky endeavors for its members, its sponsors and/or for the community at large. Thus, how the members of a collaborative identify and address those risks would have an important bearing on both the performance of the collaborative and how it is evaluated.

It is needless to say that there are differences across collaborative endeavors in terms of the amount, significance, and types of risks involved. For example, some of them, especially project partnerships established between cities and private companies carry with them significant amount of financial risks, and have thus been subject of much attention and criticism. Part of the challenge these types of collaborative endeavors present stems from the fact that there exist power differentials and information asymmetries between public and private partners, usually cities being more vulnerable party.47 Offering concrete solutions to problems associated with risks in collaborative endeavors is beyond the capacity and purpose of this paper. Instead, we should further clarify our position on the issue. In our view, crossing organizational, sectoral, and/or jurisdictional boundaries almost inevitably involves some risks. This alone should not cause the outright rejection of the idea of collaboration. It is simply because, individuals and organizations embarking on a collaborative endeavor with other organizations and individuals in their task environments are already taking risk in trying something new, something different. In other words, as departures from traditional division of labor between sectors, and/or jurisdictions as well as from hierarchical organizations we are so accustomed to in many areas of organizational world, collaboration in and of itself is a risky business!

The question, then, should not be whether one is going to take any risk in collaboration, but whether there is an acceptable and attainable balance between the risks and benefits. Framed differently, the debate should be concerned with the following questions:

- What types of risks are likely to be involved in different aspects and phases of regional collaboration?
- How and by whom the risk assessment is conducted and communicated in regional collaboration?
- How much and what types of risks are individual and institutional actors willing to take now and then?
- Is there an acceptable and sustainable balance between potential risks and benefits of collaboration?
- What are the best possible policies and tools to alleviate/contain risks associated with collaboration?

Rewards
A closely related issue concerns positive outcomes, or expected benefits of collaborative endeavors. Said differently, rewards refer to all benefits (expected to) accrue to all involved and affected parties as a result of collaborative undertakings. As discussed above in the subsection about rationales, collaborative endeavors should satisfy the expectations of its members and supporters with the results they produce. Similarly, the existence of mutual benefits for member organizations is considered to be a crucial factor in formation and viability of collaborative arrangements. As with the risks, identifying and assessing (potential) benefits of collaboration should be an important part of partnering process.48 While it may, at times, be difficult to entangling of tangible and intangible benefits of collaboration, as well as to foresee and calculate all short and long term benefits of a collaborative undertaking, participants should at least try to provide with each other a genuine dialogue around the rewards issue.

Two additional issues in relation to rewards should be considered. The first has to do with the presence or absence of tangible benefits for individual participants for their involvement and work in the collaborative. It is not to say that these individuals will pursue rewards separate from their membership to their respective organizations. Furthermore, these rewards need not be material ones. It can be in the form of professional growth and promotion opportunities, professional and personal networking opportunities. In any case, however, the rewards or incentives for individual

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47 See, for example, Bloomfield et al. 1998; Robertson and Acar, 1999.
48 See, for example, Gray, 1989; Waddock, 1989.
group members (in addition to or apart from those accruing to their organizations) should be given a serious consideration, as failing to properly address this issue may hamper the attempts to harness their utmost efforts. Second issue, on the other hand, is concerned with addressing and assessing the benefits (perceived, or real) of the collaborative for different stakeholders (e.g., for different organization or sectors, as well as for various segments of a region, or a community). While it is not always an easy task to address completely and satisfactorily, the question of “who benefits?” would (and should) not go away in any collaborative endeavour.

Participants, especially those assuming pioneering/leading roles in regional collaboration, should be ready to respond to the following questions in a fairly detailed and timely manner:

- What are the expected benefits/positive outcomes of regional collaboration?
- How and by whom the purposes, outputs, and outcomes of collaboration is identified and assessed?
- How and by whom the benefits, or rewards of collaboration communicated to various stakeholders?
- Are the short-term and long-term benefits of collaboration discussed and distributed in a balanced way?
- What are the best ways to increase/maximize the rewards associated with collaboration?

Relationships

Relationships have to do with the interplay of manifestation and processes of relating members of a collaborative to each other, to the collaborative, and the external environment within which they are operating. We use the subheading here to capture significant yet often-neglected concerns related to partnering processes. More specifically, the term “relationships” is used to point to the importance of the issues on the “soft side” of collaboration processes, including those pertaining to communication, leadership, and group dynamics.

It is true that some collaboratives carry out their tasks through the decisions and actions of autonomous organizations involved, without having much formal structures. Yet, in many partnerships and networks, even in the least structured and informal ones, group dynamics might play an important role in determining the overall direction and performance of collaboration. According to Hudson (2004: 79), “It is within networks that (…) the ‘entangling strings’ of reputation, friendship, inter-dependence and altruism become an integral part of the relationship.” Nonetheless, as Scholner (1987: 702) pointed out, research related to interorganizational relations “deals almost exclusively with macro level concerns; group functioning is not considered except in descriptive accounts of process within particular groups.” Although there is a growing interest and attention assigned to relational aspects of collaboration processes in most recent years, Scholer’s observation still stays valid to a considerable extent.

According to Kanter (1994), “Successful partnerships manage the relationships, not just the deal.” (p. 97); “Relationships between companies begin, grow, and develop—or fail—much like relationships between people.” (p. 99). Building and maintaining a healthy dose of interpersonal trust through the effective use of informal and formal group processes and communications are said to be critical in effective functioning of collaborative organizing. 49 One of the specific suggestions for improving relational dimension of collaborative endeavors is the use of a group-development approach, called Groupware, which “describes group development that reaches a mutual understanding and transcends the more immediate and interactive bases of coordination or communication through hierarchy.” 50

Another emphasis is on the need for a leadership that is more in tune with organizing properties of collaborative arrangements. Effective collaborative leaders need to be comfortable with loose organizational boundaries as well as having skills in negotiation, networking, and communication, rather than solely or extensively relying on hierarchical, top-down management approaches and techniques. 51 In short, an increased awareness of and effectively dealing with different dimensions of relationships would contribute to the overall performance of collaboratives in many ways.

51 For more information and debate on the personal and professional skills, values, and orientations of leaders needed in partnerships and networks, see, for example, Acar, 2004; Sarason and Lorentz, 1998; Williams, 2002.
The following questions might be helpful practitioners in assessing potential contributions of “relationships” to the functioning and performance of regional collaboration:

- Whether and to what extent are the relational aspects of collaboration brought to the light?
- How can past and present interactions between actors involved be described in relational terms?
- What are major dimensions of relationships that contribute positively to collaborative performance?
- What are the major strengths of collaborative leadership that contribute positively to the performance?
- How and by whom do relational aspects of regional collaboration be assessed and improved?

Reviews

The final component of our framework related with collaborative performance is meant to call attention to the issue of evaluation and accountability in and of regional collaboration. Briefly told, collaborative arrangements that bring together different individual and institutional actors around common purposes and hopes should be evaluated as to whether they are achieving what they are meant/expected to achieve. As suggested on different occasion in the preceding discussion, the issue of “reviews” would inevitably involve a lengthy discussion around many different terms, or words, including “performance”, “evaluation”, “responsibility”, “periodic reviews”, “accountability.” Instead of maintaining a detailed debate about definitions of these and other related terms, as well as problems associated with “reviews” in collaborative endeavors, we would like to call attention to two major aspects of the topic in hand. First, we argue that performance evaluation and accountability in the collaborative contexts would be more complicated than and different from those can be witnessed in single, hierarchical organizational units, due in large part to the diversity, multiplicity, and/or complexity of actors and factors involved in many collaborative arrangements. Second, underlying characteristics of performance evaluation in and around regional collaboration should be consensus-based, collective, continuous, and comprehensive. Said differently, reviews should be reflective of the collective and collaborative nature of partnerships and networks, in addition to being aware of the complexity of the issues involved. For example, parties to collaboration should reach a consensus as to when, with what frequency, and how to evaluate the progress and results. They should also take into account the short-term and long-term consequences of their decisions and actions in a balanced manner\textsuperscript{2}, in addition to being aware of the notion that partnerships and alliances cannot be ‘controlled’ by formal systems only, but require a dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures that enhance learning (Kanter, 1994: 97).

A debate around “reviews” might be revolved around the following questions:

- What are the major mechanisms/tools of influence and control in collaborative arrangements?
- What specific policies and tools are used in monitoring and evaluating the progress and results?
- How, with what frequency, and by whom do collaborative programs are/should be evaluated?
- What types of accountability mechanisms are more congruent with organizing properties of partnerships and networks?
- How might the effectiveness of existing policies and processes associated with performance evaluation and accountability be increased further?

3. Conclusion

We have noted at the outset that collaboration has become a ubiquitous phenomenon in many issue areas. We have then provided some examples about it, pointing to the changing nature of governance today. In the section two of our paper, we have first succinctly presented our main assumptions and arguments related the collaborative performance. We have then proceeded to identifying and describing the ten major factors associated with performance in and around multi-organizational, multi-soveral, and/or multi-jurisdictional collaboration. In doing so, we have also presented a set of questions related with each and every one of the ten issues, or elements around which the debate about collaborative performance should be centered.

We are aware of the fact that our paper has raised more questions than it has answered. Ours is only one of the many possible ways that the topic of collaborative performance might be framed and investigated. We utilized the “Ten

\textsuperscript{2} For more information on the topic, along with appropriate references, see, Acar, 2004: Acar and Robertson, 2004; Robertson and Acar, 1999.
Rs” framework to summarize the information and ideas about the topic in an understandable and concise manner. There is much to be learned about the topic, and further investigation of the issues surrounding collaborative performance can be expected to practical benefits for those involved in the design, management, and evaluation of inter-organizational, inter-sectoral, and inter-regional collaborative arrangements and practices. There is every reason to believe that the use of collaborative forms of organizing, such as partnerships, alliances, and networks to address common problems and concerns will only increase in the future. It is thus important to be attentive to the need for research on which to base informed conclusions regarding the most critical factors affecting the collaborative performance. We hope to have made at least a small contribution toward a better understanding of this important topic.
References


