

Abstract of thesis entitled

**Partnership Evaluation for Nature Conservation projects
in Hong Kong**

Submitted by

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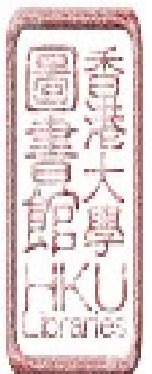
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Inter-sectoral partnerships emerged as a new implementation measure for nature conservation and sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development has expanded beyond simply conserving the nature, and also involved meeting societal needs of parties involved. The potential of partnerships in fulfilling multi-disciplinary interests and bringing about unique collaborative advantages to parties makes them an emerging area of practice in addition to policies, regulations and incentives for realizing sustainability and conservation. Theories and models for partnership have been discussed at both intellectual and action levels locally and internationally. However, little has been done on understanding the dynamics and performance of partnerships in Hong Kong in relation to the desired outcomes as the aims and objectives of partnerships. Partnerships being claimed as one of the most effective ways of implementing sustainable development, there are few publications on evaluating a nature conservation project based on the performance of partnership itself. So are the local nature conservation projects successful regarding the partnership performance? Are there any essential attributes of partnerships that contribute to project success and if so, how? Such discussion on successful experience provides valuable information in understanding partnership as a concept and a way of practice.

In-depth case studies on three local partnerships for nature conservation were conducted to explore the local understanding of and practice of partnerships with corresponding evaluation. Local information was obtained from case documentation and interviews with practitioners. Following a preset framework developed from relevant literature and readings, each case was evaluated based on partnership attributes as well as project and relational outcomes. Performance of and relationships between attributes and outcomes were examined through analysis within and across cases. Although current partnerships demonstrated advantageous features, they and their related evaluation practices did not achieve their full potential. Misinterpretation of partner relationships and imbalances in evaluation effort were observed in local cases. Nine attributes were identified as essential to project success and



eight of them were positively related to outcomes, including commitment, willingness to negotiate, knowledge, pre-existing network, capacity to change, clear common goal, decision making power and mutuality. Findings also suggested attributes contributing to partnership sustainability emerged in older projects when partner relations and relational outcomes emerged.

Although partnership features are expressed in local practice, misinterpretation of partner relations and insufficient evaluation coverage reduced the potential of partnerships. Mismatches were found in the valuation of partnership attributes between partners' perception and reality which further reduced the efficiency and potential of local partnerships. An evaluation framework is constructed for local partnerships assessing their performance using partnership attributes. Suggestions in modifying and designing their practice through encompassing interests of all partners and ensuring performance of partners are given for both existing and future partnerships to enhance success. These measures can reduce later problems and increase the efficiency of partnership and evaluation. As the relationships built between partners will be applicable to other occasions, continuous improvement and adaptation in partnerships with a proper evaluation system enables local nature conservation to benefit not only in environmental terms but societal terms as well.

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