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

Literature Review on Relationships between Government and Non-state Providers of Services

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Literature Review on Relationships between Government and Non-state Providers of Services

Introduction

This literature review explores a broad range of empirical, theoretical and exploratory or polemical literature that has examined relationships between government agencies and non-state providers (NSPs) of basic services (i.e. education, health, water and sanitation) for poor people. It has been carried out to situate a research project, Whose Public Action? (WPA), which is part of a larger research programme on Non-Governmental Public Action, funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Government-NSP relationships are sometimes created under the banner of ‘partnership’. Development ‘partnerships’ currently have a significant place in the development agenda, in which organisations from one sector (government, private or non-government) are encouraged to work together with organisations from other sectors (Hulme and Edwards 1997; Lewis 1997; WDR 1997, 2004; Fowler 1998; Najam 2000; Welle 2001; Plummer 2002; Brinkerhoff 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Cornwall and Brock 2005; Haque 2005; MacDonald and Chrisp 2005; Rao and Smyth 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006. The term ‘non-state provider’ (NSP) can be used broadly to denote any type of organisation outside the state. However, in this literature review and in our research, we have broadly narrowed down our coverage of NSPs to not-for-profit organisations – although some of the literature may also include for-profit NSPs.

We have searched the literature that analyses or discusses relations between government and not-for-profit service providers. It is important to note that the review does not cover government’s relations with other forms of non-state provider; nor does it does not seek to deal with all possible relationships unless these appear in this literature. Thus, relations of ‘contract’ which are an important part of much of the literature on public-private partnership hardly make only a small appearance in the literature on government’s relations with NGOs and are therefore not extensively explored here.

In carrying out the review, databases were searched to locate research studies on relationships between NSPs (international and national), between NSPs, government agencies and donors. A variety of search-terms was used because of the diversity of the language associated with NSPs (mainly NGOs, non-profit organisations, civil society), state (mainly government or public sector) and relationships (mainly partnership). Different combinations of associated terms were used in undertaking the searches:

- State-NGOs
- State-NSPs
- State-civil society
- Government-NGOs
- Government-NSPs
- Government-non-profit
- Partnerships
- Relationships
- Interactions

The term ‘non-state provider’ is not widely used in the literature. In this review, we refer to the terms used by the different authors.
This literature review has five sections. The first section introduces the perceived comparative advantages of NSPs and government agencies in collaborating to provide basic services. This section also discusses some of the main criticisms of NSP-government relationships. The second section focuses on research on NSP-government relationships, discussing different types of empirical or theoretical contributions and shortcomings or gaps in the research. The third section focuses on the key issues influencing NSP-government relationships/partnerships. This section follows the logic of the research ‘flow diagram’ that has guided our research: institutional conditioning factors, the nature of the organisations, the agenda of engagement, boundary issues, the nature of the relationship between NSPs and government agencies, and the effects of relationships on NSPs and government. The fourth section provides an overview of the typologies that have been used in empirical and theoretical literature to describe NSP-government relationships. The final section concludes by drawing together key implications for our research and identifying the literature that is of particular relevance to the WPA research. Breaking down the literature into these sections means that there is some overlap between them.

SECTION 1: Comparative advantages and critiques of NSP-government relationships

The World Bank World Development Report 2004 argues that states are opting for alternative forms of service delivery including by contracting out service delivery to NSPs (both private and non-profit) (World Bank 2004: 3 - 18). It is clear that, in principle, governments are increasingly aiming to limit their role in the direct provision of essential goods and services and are rather financing and facilitating NSPs (Brinkerhoff 2002; Batley and Larbi 2004). In their comparative study of NSP-government relationships in Chile and Uruguay, Pereira (2005) observed a higher presence of NGOs in situations where the government shows one or more of the following conditions: limited resources to extend its own coverage; a need to adopt new modes of intervention; a lack of legitimacy to intervene; a lack of (well-prepared) human resources.

As widely referenced in the literature, Najam (2000) identifies a ‘striking trend’ toward an increasing interaction between non-governmental and governmental entities all over the world. The literature predominantly identifies the rationale behind this ‘striking trend’ as based on a range of perceived ‘comparative advantages’ of NSPs in general and relationships between government agencies and NSPs in particular (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Fowler 1997; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Najam 2000; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006).

Much of the comparative advantage argument stems from a negative perception of governments as being unable to provide adequately for their citizens. For example, Sansom (2006) explains that, increasingly, governments in developing countries recognise that the public sector alone cannot provide adequate water and sanitation services to all. Moran (2006) argues that the rise of NSPs and subsequent case for government-NSP relationships have arisen in response both to perceived state failure to provide services and comprehensive democratisation. Plummer (2002) introduces her book, *Influencing Partnerships*, with the argument that in the ‘context of the widespread decentralisation and devolution of responsibility to local levels of government, some municipalities have quickly found that they have neither the human nor the financial resources to meet the extent of their obligations’ (Plummer 2002: 1). Sood (2000) identifies structural and administrative reasons for government failure in an inefficient use of financial and material resources, top-down strategies and rigid hierarchical structures that fail to address the needs of the poor. Grindle (2002) describes negative perceptions of state service delivery in developing countries as slothful, corrupt, inefficient, and incapable of reaching the poorest;
Gideon (1998) uses additional terms such as clientelistic and over-bureaucratic.

The case for NSPs as being able to fill the gaps left by state failure (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Stone 1996; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Robinson 1997; Sood 2000; Batley 2006; Moran 2006) is made partly on the grounds of their greater efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery (Bouget and Prouteau 2005). Hulme and Edwards (1997) in their edited book, NGOs, donors and state: Too close for comfort? examine the debates surrounding the ways in which international donor agencies and states are taking a much greater interest in NGOs (Clark 1997; Robinson 1997; Wood 1997) with case studies from different countries depicting the variety of state reactions: Brazil (Bosch et al. 1997); China (Howell 1997); Sri Lanka (Wanigaratne and Perera 1997); Arab states (Marzouk 1997); Latin America (Pearce 1997). Addressing the exponential rise in the numbers and scope of NGOs internationally, Hulme and Edwards argue that they have been part of the process of ‘rolling back the state’. Many donor organisations have favoured NGOs (or NSPs more generally) as a means of democratising, remedying poverty, strengthening civil society, and substituting for government agencies.

The perceived comparative advantages of NSPs relate to generalised understandings of their organisational forms, agendas and practices. As organisations, NSPs are widely perceived as being structured in a less hierarchical, more democratic and flexible form than government (Stone 1996; Lewis 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003; Streeten 1997; Sood 2000; Welle 2001; Wamai 2004; Pereira 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006). NSPs are generally understood not to have profit seeking motives and to have a greater commitment to serving and working with the poor (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Lewis 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003; Sood 2000; Welle 2001; Wamai 2004; Mayhew 2005; Sanyal 1994; Clarke 1998; Fowler 1998; Grindle 2002; Haque 2002, 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006).

The looser organisational forms and dedicated agendas of NGOs are associated with a view of them as more innovative, accountable, effective in terms of cost and delivery, and having greater local and community knowledge than government agencies and officials (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Lewis 1997; 2001, 2003; Sood 2000; Welle 2001; Wamai 2004; Bouget and Prouteau 2005; Mayhew 2005; Pereira 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006). Farrington and Bebbington (1992), for example, in an international study comparing 70 cases of government agencies working with NSPs to provide agricultural services, identified different areas in which NGOs have been innovative and successful. For example, they have developed systems approaches to technological development, used diagnostic and participatory methods, restructured social organisations and introduced new management approaches, which government typically finds difficult to introduce. Mercer (2002) outlines three main arguments in favour of NGOs: they are able to ‘pluralise’ the institutional arena (i.e. they bring in more civic actors, more ‘voice’, more networking), to work closely with grass-roots organisations (and are therefore closer to the poor and marginalised), and to check state power by challenging authority at both national and local levels.

In addition to ‘filling the gap’ left by government failure to provide basic service, NSPs are also valued as having the capacity to challenge government approaches and practices through advocacy (Lewis 1998; Brinkerhoff 1999; Sood 2000; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005). Brinkerhoff (1999) contends that the involvement of NGOs in service delivery provides them with opportunities to extend their influence to policy planning and implementation. Pereira (2005) argues that NGOs can also be understood as social movements aiming to counter what they perceive as oppressive government agendas and practices. Sood (2000), in a research study on NSP-government relationship in the water sector in Gujarat, India, notes that one of the critical roles NGOs can perform is to enhance government accountability by researching laws, analysing current policies and evaluating budget allocations. The NSP is therefore valued as a ‘watchdog’ over the government (Sood 2000).
Considering the failures of government service provision and the perceived NSP ‘comparative advantages’ briefly outlined above, relationships bringing NSPs and government agencies together appear to be an obvious step forward. As MacDonald and Chrisp (2005) explain, the simple logic of government-NSP relationships is that, although all organisations have strengths, no single organisation has the strength to do everything. In their empirical study of NSP-government relationships in Bangladesh to control tuberculosis, Ullah et al. (2006) argue that NSPs and government agencies together can generate synergy and facilitate a greater flow of information that is fruitful for more effective service delivery in the health sector. Wamai, in his study comparing NSP-government relationships in the health sectors of Finland and Kenya, argues that ‘NGOs have many comparative advantages and governments ought to harness their operations as partners of a welfare society’ (Wamai 2004: 303). Furthermore, NSPs often need resources from the government, thus there is a level of reciprocal ‘comparative advantage’. As Sanyal (1994) explains:

Despite the growing criticism of government and the concurrent rise in the popularity of NGOs during the 1970s and 1980s, by the beginning of the 1990s it had become evident that, without some form of state involvement, developmental efforts of NGOs, however well intentioned, cannot flourish. (Sanyal 1994: 48)

The literature indicates an abundance of tensions that may arise in the course of NSP-government relationships. It is in spite of these tensions that NSPs and government agencies work together. In her doctoral study of NGOs and the Zimbabwean state, Dorman (2001) explains that the ideological commitments of NGOs and the government are generally similar at a broad level and that both benefit materially and non-materially from engaging in a relationship to provide basic services. Furthermore, Dorman argues that there tend to be strong cultural and social connections between élites working in government agencies and NSPs. Sood (2000) explains that, although tensions exist between the state and NGOs, both sets of actors realise the fundamental benefits that can come from partnership. In a detailed research study of the legislative histories of NSP-government relationships in Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia and Nepal, Mayhew (2005) found that each of the four governments wanted to maintain supremacy over the public sector but recognised that they alone were not sufficient to provide adequate health services, and therefore sought NGOs to fill the gap.

There is a range of critiques of the perceived comparative advantages of NSPs and of relationships between NSPs and government agencies. In an ethnographic study of a multi-organisational partnership in Bangladesh between NGOs, government agencies, think-tanks and local farmers, Lewis (1998) argues that fixed notions of ‘comparative advantages’ were not appropriate as the partnership was created through informal, personal links and evolving relationships. Moreover, the comparative advantages of each particular NGO and government agency participating in the partnership were different. Mercer (2002) argues that the role of NGOs vis-à-vis the state in regard to democratic development is more complex than evaluations typically demonstrate. Mercer contends that whether NGOs strengthen or weaken the government and/or civil society is a highly subjective issue, interpreted from a range of standpoints of different actors, institutions and organisations. Pereira (2005) argues that assessments of the benefits and advantages of NGOs’ participation in the delivery of public goods are far from unanimous among scholars and policy analysts.

The greater legitimacy or ‘success’ in service delivery of NGOs are rarely supported by evidence to back the claims of comparative advantage;

- NGOs may also have hierarchical and bureaucratic characteristics and a consequent lack of democratic accountability, particularly as they expand in size and scope;
- The cost-effectiveness of NGOs is questionable;
- NGOs may not reach the poor, particularly the ‘poorest’ of the poor;
- NGOs may undermine the role of the state;
- NGOs may not challenge oppressive power relations within communities (e.g. local elites);
- Scale of coverage is often limited and patchy;
- There may be competition between NGOs leading to fragmentation and overlap;
- NGOs may have little autonomy from donor agencies and undergo ‘depoliticisation’

The role of NGOs as the ‘favoured child’ of donor agencies as portrayed in the Hulme and Edwards (1997) book, was countered just nine years later in a recent special edition of the Journal of International Development (2006). In this edition, Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006) argue that, although NGOs have entered the cultural mainstream (i.e. in film and media), there is now more emphasis on civil society, governance and cross-sectoral partnerships. NGOs were ‘in’ for some time and favoured by development donors (Hulme and Edwards 1997) but, as Lewis and Opoku-Mensah (2006) explain, NGOs are currently being pushed down the donor agenda and perceptions of NGOs are increasingly complex, ambiguous and controversial. However, this does not mean that NSPs (or NGOs) are any less abundant on the ground.

Abrahamsen (2004) argues that NGOs that deliver services tend to alleviate the symptoms rather than the causes. Lorgen (1998: 330) contends that NGO involvement in service provision opens a ‘Pandora’s box of questions, both practical and ideological’. Along these lines, Wood (1997) critically asks:

- To what extent do citizens lose basic political rights over the delivery of universal services and entitlements?
- Can the state devolve responsibility for implementation without losing control over policy and therefore losing responsibility for upholding the rights of citizens?
- How much do citizens lose their political rights if the delivery of universal services and entitlements is entrusted to non-state bodies which would at best only be accountable to the state rather than directly to those with service entitlements?

Fowler (2000), Pender (2001), Abrahamsen (2004) and Rao and Smyth (2005) indicate scepticism about donor motivations in establishing closer relationships between government agencies and NSPs, and question whether it amounts to a new form of conditionality. Crawford (2003) questions whether the language of ‘partnership’ signifies a change in aid relations away from the exertion of power through conditionality of the 1980s and 1990s, or whether partnership is the latest guise behind power-based relations. Lister (2001), in her examination of relationships between a bi-lateral donor agency, an international NGO and a national NGO in Central America argues that, although there might be good working relationships, it can be questioned whether there is a genuine sharing of skills, responsibility and accountability and whether there is enough synergy to characterise a ‘partnership’. Lister (2001) argues:

It is my contention that one of the instrumental effects of the discourse of partnership is the adaptation of the power framework and the creation of a slightly changed reality, which serve to hide the fundamental power asymmetries within development activities and essentially maintain the status quo. (Lister 2001: 235)

Fowler (1998: 140) argues that the usage of the term ‘partnership’ in the development field ranks second after ‘participation’ and is closely followed by ‘empowerment’ (which is ranked third).
Yet, as Lewis (1997) and Batley (2006) both argue, there is a gap between partnership rhetoric and reality. Pettigrew differentiates between ‘symbolic’ versus ‘real’ partnerships and Batley between ‘formal’ and ‘real’ dialogue. Several authors have noted that partnership outcomes have often not fulfilled promises, being ineffective for communities in spite of large amounts of funding (Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Davies 2002; Haque 2002). Welle (2001: 2) argues that ‘partnership’ is flexible and a ‘good’ word but ‘it tends to hide more than it reveals about the real issues it deals with’. However, Welle concludes that, rather than abandoning the concept of ‘partnership’ in the development agenda, it should be examined whether the pre-conditions for different forms of collaboration exist.

In the following paragraphs, we discuss the nature of the literature itself.

Several articles argue that the literature on partnerships tends to be dominated by a thin, prescriptive, instrumentalist account of the factors that make a relationship between government and NSP ‘better’ (Najam 2000; Brinkerhoff 2002; Mercer 2002; MacDonald and Chrisp 2005; Moran 2006). MacDonald and Chrisp (2005: 308) 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. 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 (2006: 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, 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).

Brinkerhoff (2002) separates development-orientated literature on partnership into normative, reactive or instrumental. The normative 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.

Abrahamsen (2004) argues that two main academic positions 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, 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’ (Abrahamsen 2004).
The literature analysed in this review of 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, conditioning factors driving the dynamics of these relationships, best-practice methodological approaches to research on NSP-government relationships and appropriate ways forward. The next section provides an overall assessment of empirical research on NSP-government relationships, theoretical frameworks used and shortcomings or gaps in research, and suggestions for improvement in further research.

SECTION 2: Research on NSP-government relationships

The intention of this section is to provide an overview of research on NSP-government relationships by focusing on different empirical and theoretical contributions and key shortcomings and gaps in the research. The literature covered relevant empirical research, theoretical and exploratory/polemical publications. The first sub-section provides an overview of 20 empirical research studies. The methodological approaches and tools used to undertake the research in these empirical studies are discussed. The sub-section on theoretical contributions to research on NSP-government relationships provides an overview of (i) theories proposed (but not necessarily applied) to enable understanding of relationships between government and NSPs, and (ii) theories that have been applied to empirical research. The sub-section on shortcomings and gaps outlines a range of critiques of past research and suggestions for future research on relationships between government agencies and NSPs.

2.1 Methodological contributions to empirical research on NSP-government relationships

Several publications argue that the base of empirical analysis of relationships between NSPs and government agencies is weak (Hulme and Edwards 1997; Selsky and Parker 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006; Moran 2006). To move forward, Selsky and Parker recommend that larger-scale empirical research should be carried out on NSP-government relationships and Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006) suggest paying closer attention to theory as well as context, history and power.

Several empirical research studies emerged during the process of this review that held some level of relevance to our research interests. However, many of these studies 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, 20 empirical research case studies are introduced in this section, although the majority are discussed in much further detail in Section 3 on ‘Key issues influencing NSP-government relationships/partnerships’ in this review. All research studies listed below examined at least one NSP-government relationship to a significant degree.

- **NSP-government**: 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); Wamai 2004 (health sector - Finland and Kenya); 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);

- **Multi-organisational:** Lewis 1998 (Bangladesh); Pettigrew 2003 (UK); Thompson 2005 (UK);
- **NSP and government policies:** Campos et al. 2004 (Pakistan);
- **Civil society and government:** 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). Campos et al. (2004) 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).

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

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

Snavely and Desai (2000) argue that case studies of NGO-government relationships comparing different countries can highlight the historical, cultural, economic, legal and political conditions that mould the social functions and interactions of NGOs and government agencies. Several of the empirical studies used a comparative analytic case study approach (Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Wamai 2004; Mayhew 2005; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom – all 2006). Two of the empirical studies compare different relationships, one within the same national NGO in Ghana (Welle 2001) and the other between different NGO-government relationships within Mumbai (Ramanath 2005). However, the majority of comparative research studies compare relationships between different countries (Brinkerhoff 2002; Wamai 2004; Mayhew 2005; Pereira 2005; Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom - 2006). Pereira (2005) 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 (2005) 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.
Four of the comparative empirical cases discuss how cases studies were identified for the purposes of the research (Wamai 2004; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Batley et al. 2006). Two of these were doctoral studies (Wamai 2004 and Ramanath 2005). Wamai (2004) identified ‘contextually rich case studies’ in country-specific health systems in Kenya and Finland. Ramanath (2005) used a multiple case study approach with two units of analysis: three different NGOs (each being a separate unit of analysis) and historical critical incidents of each NGO based on key housing interventions. Pereira (2005), in an unpublished academic working paper, explains how NGOs were selected because their main field of intervention was in the health sector and according to three other criteria: ‘typical’ cases considered to be representative of the rest of the category; ‘innovative’ cases promoting new approaches and strategies; and ‘relevant’ cases referring to those organisation with high coverage in terms of the extension of their actions. The research by Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom selected cases in health, education, water and sanitation that represented four types of engagement between government and non-state providers: policy dialogue, regulation, facilitation and contracting (Batley 2006 a).

Several empirical studies used historical analysis methods as the core component of their methodological framework (Stone 1996; Lewis 1998, 2004; Sen 1999; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Mayhew 2005; Ramanath 2005). These studies all emphasise the importance of analysing NSPs and their various relationships through a historical framework that prioritises the particular context of the research study and the evolution of the NSP and its various relationships, including with different levels of government. These studies used archival and documentary analysis in combination either with interviews (Stone 1996; Sen 1999; Brinkerhoff 2002; Mayhew 2005) or interviews and participant observation techniques (Lewis 1998, 2004; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Ramanath 2005). 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 empirical research studies undertook ethnography or used an ‘ethnographic perspective’ (Lewis 1998, 2004; Sood 2000; Welle 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Wamai 2004; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Thompson 2005). 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 Tromman 2004) using a more focused, short-term approach. In the case of the current research, it would imply participating in, and examining, everyday practices of the NSP and possibly the government agency, as well as in particular events that are of interest to the relevant research.

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).

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 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Bebbington et al. 2004). The relative depth of discussions of ethnographic approaches may arise because they are considered as alternatives to normative approaches; perhaps more explanation has been seen as necessary. Markowitz (2001) advocates 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. (2003) argues that ethnographic studies of organisations are few in number in spite of the common proposal that there should be more.

Ethnographic studies of organisations tend to focus on ‘the way of life in an organisation’ or ‘a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances or situations in distinctive ways’ (Lewis et al. 2003: 548). Lewis et al. (2003) 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 (2003) explains that ethnography is located between structure and process and can help illuminate complex processes of change in particular historical conjunctures. Fisher (1997) argues that ethnographic studies of NGOs demonstrate the importance of context. Fisher explains that ethnographic studies of an NGO should include its history (how it emerged and how it has changed) and how it has entered into and moved out of webs of fluid relationships (with intermediaries, governments, constituencies, communities, leaders, elites, municipalities, state institutions, other local, national and international NGOs, social movements and NGO coalitions). Bebbington et al. (2003) combine discourse analysis and an ethnographic perspective in a study of the practices that surround the production of social capital discourses and their translation into material practices of intervention. Bebbington et al. argue that their methodological framework provides an understanding of why some conceptualisations of social capital were prioritised over others. They argue that there is a tendency for discourse analysts to treat institutions (in this case the World Bank) as a ‘black box’ rather than as intricate and interlocking ‘battlefields of knowledge’ in which a series of encounters occur between different actors who negotiate across, and in some sense battle between, different types of knowledge.

Pettigrew (2003) employed an 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 (1984) notion of power 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 analysis of the development and emergence of the partnership, and studies of current formal and informal ‘back-staging’ interactions within the partnership.

2.2 Theoretical contributions to NSP-government relationships

Several writers argue that there is a shortage of theoretical analyses of the nature of NSP-government relationships (Salamon and Anheier 1996; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Lister 2000; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Selsky and Parker 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006). For example, Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 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.

Some of the theories mentioned in the empirical studies are briefly outlined below. Each of
these theories contributes to different perspectives, characteristics and dimensions of NSP-government relationships: 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. This section begins with discussions of those empirical studies that have applied theoretical frameworks in a more thorough and rigorous way across one or more studies: new institutional economics theory, ecological theory, civil society, power and discourse theory.

**New Institutional Economics theory**
Campos et al. (2004) used a New Institutional Economics (NIE) 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. (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 – in Hirschman this would be about loyalty to political leaders or firms); and exit (i.e. moving demand to an alternative provider).

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.

**Ecological theory**
In her research on the evolution of three NGO-government relationships in the housing sector of Mumbai, Ramanath (2005) used the concept of an ‘ecosystem’ to understand NGO-government interactions over the lifetimes of the NGOs. The term ‘Ecosystem’ in this case refers 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 (2005) argues that assumptions about the parallels with ecosystems ignore the dynamics of organisations and their variability across time and space.

**Civil society**
Civil society is identified and discussed in detail in Section 3 on ‘Key issues of NSP-government relationships’ (Fisher 1997; White 1999; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Mercer 2002; Mohan 2002; Kamat 2004; Lewis 2004; Mayhew 2005; Osborne et al. 2005). There are different theories and perceptions of what civil society is and why it is important in any given context. 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.
Power
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.

Several empirical studies explicitly use power as their core analytic concept (Stone 1996; Lewis 1998, 2004; Tappin 2000; Welle 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Thompson 2005). These employ several different theoretical and methodological approaches. Tappin (2000) uses a ‘framework of power’ developed by French and Raven (1959) to examine an NSP-government relationship in Tuvalu. This claims that five sources of power exist: reward (power wielder controlling material resources); coercive (ability to punish); referent (personal qualities and ability to influence others’ actions); legitimate (position power – authority – nature of position or status) and expert (relevant experience or expertise, often acquired skills). Dorman (2001), in her study of the history of NSP-government relationships in Zimbabwe, expands upon Dahl’s (1957) framework of power by using hegemonic theory emphasising the need to make sense of the legitimating force that establishes consent. Thompson (2005) uses Foucault’s (1990) theory of ‘governmentality’ to explore the relationship between two different levels of government in the UK. Governmentality theory examines ways in which power is exercised by government through networks of inter-connected actors, policy expectations and subtle administrative requirements as mechanisms of control. Hilhorst (2003) uses power as the core of her approach to ‘doing’ an ethnography of different NGOs within the Cordillera region in the Philippines.

In a research study not included in the 20 empirical case studies on NSP-government relationships (because it examines relationships between an international and a national NGO, and a bi-lateral donor agency), Lister (2000) uses an organisational theory framework also adapted from Dahl (1957) to explore issues of power and to understand the processes of partnership. Dahl’s (1957) 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 (i.e. resources involved in organisational relationships);
- the means of power (i.e. specific actions by which A can make use of the resources);
- the scope of power (i.e. the set of specific actions that A can get B to perform by using its power – exerting influence and distinguishing between structural and operational influences);
- the amount of power (i.e. net increase in the probability of B performing some specific action due to A using its means of power);
- and the framework of power (i.e. the definition of the overall framework - determining the exercise of power in the relationship).

However, as Welle (2001) explains, Lister (2000) 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 like dialogue which actually throw a more positive light on the partnership than would have been identified through Dahl’s approach.
Discourse theory

Welle (2001) uses a discourse approach to compare two different relationships a particular NGO is engaged in (i.e. with an INGO and with a local government agency) but does not explain the theories of discourse she uses. In a research study not included in the 20 empirical cases (although included in Section 4 on Typology), Skelcher et al. (2005) 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 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Discourse theory argues a deep connection between language, meaning and power. Skelcher et al. (2005) differentiate between partnership discourses that are based on managerialism, consociationalism or participatory democracy.

Several theories were discussed only briefly in the empirical studies examined in this literature review on NSP-government relationships rather than rigorously applied: resource dependency, organisational theory, inter-organisational theory, welfare citizenship theory, government-market failure theory, supply-side theory, trust theory, welfare state theory and social origins theory. These theories are outlined below.

Resource dependency

Stone (1996) and Tappin (2000) both identify resource dependency theory as useful to explain the interdependent nature of NSP-government relationships, where one organisation is dependent on the other for financial, technological or knowledge resources. Stone contends that, although useful, focusing only on resource dependency may blind one to the range of multiple institutional pressures that shape and configure organisations.

Organisational theory

Tappin (2000) briefly refers to organisational theory as being the conceptual framework used in combination with French and Raven’s perception of power to address her research questions: Does international intervention affect the inter-organisational basis of power? What observable changes in power have taken place?

Principal-agent theory: Principal-agent theory explains how to best organise relationships in which one party (the principal) determines the work, which another party (the agent) undertakes. The central dilemma investigated by principal agent theorists is how to get the employee or contractor (agent) to act in the best interests of the principal (the employer, government or citizen) when the employee or contractor has an informational advantage over and has different interests from the principal. The theory argues that under conditions of incomplete information and uncertainty, two agency problems arise: ‘adverse selection’ and ‘moral hazard’. Adverse selection is the condition under which the principal cannot ascertain if the agent has the ability to do the work for which he is being paid. Moral hazard is the condition under which the principal cannot be sure if the agent has put forth maximal effort. This theoretical framework has been widely applied in the examination of contractual relationships in the market, and also between government and firms or large, formal organisations (Batley and Larbi 2004)

In his article describing the types of engagement between government and non-state service providers in the water and sanitation sectors, Sansom (2006) used ‘principal-agent’ theory to explain that government agencies, acting as principal, are able to structure their relationship with large private water utilities, as agent, through a well-designed contract and effective management. However, in the case of a government agency acting as the principal over informal water providers as agents, there is much less capacity for control. Sansom (2006) argues that this is due to the diverse and informal nature of small water providers.

Principal-agency theory, along with theories of social capital were central in the initial proposal of
this research study: Whose Public Action? Aside from the brief description that Sansom (2006) used to explain aspects of regulation in the water sector, the other articles by Batley (2006), Palmer (2006) and Rose (2006) study did not explicitly employ principal-agency or social capital theories.

In terms of social capital, Campos et al. (2004) explain the institutional success of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Pakistan as being related to the ‘deepening of social capital’ in ‘good’ NGOs, helping them to offset the effects of bad policies that compromise their autonomy. Campos et al. tested four hypotheses in their research on AKRSP that were partly inspired by theories of social capital: 1) the more often the Village Organisation (VO) meets, the more successful it should be; 2) if the VO has a formal set of rules, we expect an increase in the likelihood of its success; 3) the greater the number of households in a village that are members of the VO, the more successful it will be; 4) ethnic group characteristics provide a better explanation for success than simple VO structure. Campos et al. note that the first two hypotheses were particularly motivated by social capital theories, arguing that features such as trust, norms and networks can improve efficiency by facilitating cooperative actions.

The notion of social capital is strongly linked to the importance of networks, coalitions and alliances of individuals within NGOs and government agencies. Although Section 3 on ‘Key issues in NSP-government relationships’ goes into further detail on the importance of networks, coalitions and alliances, it should be mentioned here that 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 (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Stone 1996; Fisher 1997; Fowler 1997; Lorgen 1998; Lister 2000; Sood 2000; Brainard and Siplon 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Bouget and Prouteau 2003; Elyachar 2003; Hilhorst 2003; Campos et al. 2004; Haque 2004 and 2005; Henry et al. 2005; Mageli 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006; Nelson 2006).

Theories of social capital can help explain different dynamics within NSP-government relationships (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Evans 1996). 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.

Wamai examines (2004) a range of other theories in his study of NGO-government relationships in Kenya and Finland: welfare state theory, inter-organisational theory, welfare citizenship theory, government-market failure theory, supply-side theory, trust theory and social origins theory. Wamai (2004) does not rigorously apply any of these during his analysis although each is valuable in understanding different aspects of NSP-government relationships. The first three theories (i.e. welfare state theory, government-market failure theory and supply-side theory) relate to the comparative advantage argument:

Welfare state theory indicates where the state has social responsibility to provide welfare services but has generally ignored the question of NGOs.
**Government and market failure theories**, Wamai (2004) explains, identify the inherent limitation in the government and market’s ability efficiently to supply sufficient quantities of public goods. These theories, he argues, are the predominant technical explanations for the increase in collaboration between government agencies and NSPs. These theories are the basis for the technical argument for Public-Private Partnerships.

**Supply-side theory**, according to Wamai, critiques these technical explanations by positing the tendency for organisations to emerge in areas that attract followers and funding as well as emerging to respond to a diverse range of unresolved social problems.

The other theories (i.e. welfare citizenship theory, trust theory, social origins theory and inter-organisational theory) have to do with dynamics within and between organisations:

**Welfare citizenship theory**, Wamai explains, focuses on the extent to which individuals are perceived as having their own rights. Whereas the functionalist approach analyses the role of social institutions, welfare citizenship theory has as its central emphasis the individuals who constitute the institutions. Social welfare is a system of trust, based on universal suffrage, about the allocation of public goods to which qualified citizens have equality of rights. Thus welfare citizenship refers to the political aspects of social welfare in an industrialised society.

**Trust theory** emerges from contract failure theory. Asymmetric and imperfect information mean that consumers are unable to acquire an accurate assessment of the quality and quantity of goods and services the market provides. The response is demand for provision by organisations, outside the private sector and government, in which consumers can have trust.

**Social origins theory** claims that the development of institutions (e.g. NGOs) in society is mediated by specific histories that shape the choices we make in patronising specific service systems. The theory views NGOs not as an isolated phenomenon but as an integral part of a social system, and whose role and scale is a by-product of historical forces. Social origins theory argues that national patterns of service arrangements are shaped more by functions of socio-political integration, organisation style or culture than by technical criteria of economic efficiency.

**Inter-organisational relations theory** analyses relations between interacting agents that are working toward a particular goal. IOR has its roots in sociology but is also prominent in economics. Wamai explains that, although economic theories tend to argue that incentives are predominantly profit-oriented, IOR can also be seen as a part of a growing body of literature on social capital. This argues for the advantages of government-NGO relationships in terms of their complementarity (i.e. the division of labour between them operates in such a way that they support each other) and embeddedness (i.e. one sector operates from its own specific context to enhance the effectiveness of the other as each has its own specialised mode of operation).

### 2.3 Shortcomings of research on NSP-government relationships

This section outlines some of the shortcomings and gaps that have been highlighted with reference to empirical research on NSP-government relationships, and identifies recommendations for further research. Many of these gaps are related to deficiencies in understanding the context within which NSPs and government agencies and the complexity of their relationships. For example, Sood (2000) argues that NGO-government relationships are complex, intertwining alliances. One of the key conclusions emerging from a multi-organisational empirical study by Lewis (1998: 335) was that ‘partnership is a complex process. Partnership building is best viewed as a fluid and subtle process that may need to be constantly
reworked in the light of experience.’

Some literature argues that there is a need to understand NSP-government relationships by examining political, social, cultural and economic realities (Bratton 1989; Farrington et al. 1993; Stone 1996; Sen 1999; Dorman 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Bebbington et al. 2004; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006). Dorman and Pettigrew 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 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. He 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.

Several of the empirical studies on NSP-government relationships emphasise the importance of taking into account the history of these relationships (Stone 1996; Lewis 1998, 2004; Dorman 2001; Lister 2001; Wamai 2004; Hilhorst 2003; Ramanath 2005; Batley 2006; Moran 2006). For example, Stone argues that there is a need for research that documents the richness and historical diversity of organisational responses to various institutional environments. Wamai emphasises that historical, political and cultural characteristics are important in understanding relationships. Lister explains that empirical studies tend to ignore both the role of individuals and the historical and socio-political factors that may cause relationships to fail. These claims coincide with Dorman’s findings from her research on the history of NGOs in Zimbabwe, that NGO-government relationships were historically and contextually conditioned.

Several publications emphasised that issues of context, history and power should be merged in research studies on NSP-government relationships (Hulme and Edwards 1997; White 1999; Mattlin 2001; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Bebbington et al. 2003; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Selsky and Parker 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006). Lewis and Opoku-Mensah declare 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 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 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. In addition, White and Sen claim that it is important to understand the ‘social history’ of an NGO as this can lead to variances in its relationships with the government, in the present and future. This is based on the understanding that NGOs are founded and emerge in different socio-political and economic contexts and at particular historical junctures, which in turn influence NGO-government relationships.

Rao and Smyth (2005) 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), 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 (2001) 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?**

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, 2006; Pettigrew 2003; and 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 2006: 494). Ramanath (2005), 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. (Ramanath 2005: 157)

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 (2003: 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 (1994) delineates three phases in the institutional development of successful NGOs: their origin, growth and expansion, and post-success phase. Sanyal articulates a need to probe the nature of linkages and distances between the NGO and the government (i.e. the different formal and informal dimensions of the relationship) and try to understand how they were created and what impact they had on the NGO’s internal operation at each stage.

Sanyal (1994), Najam (2000) and Ramanath (2005) each proclaim the importance of analysing the strategies adopted and carried out by the institution on each side of the relationship. Sanyal (1994: 49-50) explains that the strategies adopted by one to strike a balance between incorporation and autonomy must influence, and at the same time be influenced by, the strategies that the other adopts towards it. 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 Opoku-Mensah (2006) 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’ (Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006: 670)

Several publications contend that the majority of research studies on NSP-government
relationships have focused on identifying the relative strengths (i.e. comparative advantages) of each organisation in addressing development objectives (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Sanyal 1994; Sen 1999; Najam 2000; Hilhorst 2003; Ramanath 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006; Seckinelgin 2006). There has been a tendency for research on NSP-government relationships to focus either too heavily on the NSP or on the ‘comparative advantages’ of each organisation. Sen (1999) argues the comparative advantage framework falls short in illuminating how relationships operate in the real world, failing to answer questions such as:

- Why have these organisations not joined forces in the past if development could benefit from collaboration?
- Why do certain NGOs tend to collaborate with the government while others do not?
- Why do the state and NGOs collaborate reluctantly at times?
- What types of political regimes are likely to collaborate with NGOs?

Hilhorst (2003), Lewis and Opuku-Mensah (2006) and Seckinelgin (2006) have all articulated the tendency for an ‘NGO-centricism’ within NSP-government research. Seckinelgin (2006) explains that NGO-centricism 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.
NOTE: Arrows denote stages of our research and flows of conditioning factors to both the state and non-state actors involved in the partnership
SECTION 3: Key issues influencing NSP-government relationships

The sequencing of issues discussed in this section coincides with the logic of the Whose Public Action (WPA) research ‘flow diagram’ that is set out on the preceding page. This flow diagram has guided our research questions, methodological tools and fieldwork techniques, and subsequent analyses. The WPA research flow diagram aims to describe the various conditioning factors influencing the dynamics of NSP-government relationships: macro and meso-level institutional factors, the nature of the organisation and agenda for engagement. It then considers the ‘feedback loop’, the effects of NSP-government relationships on the nature of the organisations and its immediate meso-level environment. Annex 1 describes the logic of the research flow diagram used in the WPA research.

Although the main categories outlined in this section reflect those depicted in the flow diagram, other categories are also used in the review. The first sub-section focuses on the institutional conditioning factors and covers: historical influences, legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, globalisation forces, donor influences and state-regime type.

3.1 Institutional conditioning factors

This section of the literature review covers key issues related to the macro and meso-level factors that condition organisations and the dynamics of the relationship between NSPs and government. In addition to these, the flow diagram indicates service characteristics as conditioning factors. This literature review does not focus specifically on particular service characteristics. However, some service characteristics are briefly referred to in the empirical studies that are discussed.

Each of the macro-conditioning factors shown in the flow diagram is included in this section: state-regime type, authority structures, laws/constitution and history of state-NSP relations. The category of authority structures is subsumed within state-regime type and donor influences. Among the meso-conditioning factors depicted in the flow diagram, policy objectives and standards are categorised as a key issue in this review. The other categories – financial dependency, accountability and networks are discussed, although using different terms and in other parts of the review. Financial dependency has been categorised in the literature review under donor influences and networks are dealt with later in the Boundaries section of this literature review under the Nature of the organisation. The issue of accountability is discussed in the section on the Nature of NSP-government relationships. The issue of globalisation has been added to this section on the literature review because it was referenced in several articles.

Institutional conditioning factors constitute the context in which NSPs and government agencies operate. They include political, legal, social and cultural institutions. The WPA research hypothesises that the institutional context conditions the formation of government and non-government organisations: their interests; values, ideologies, understandings and goals; resources, assets and capacity; decision-making processes and organisational structures; and the management of staff. In their turn, these affect the agenda and commitments (their definition of ‘public action’) that organisations bring to the encounter with ‘partners’ and their incentives for entering into relationships. These hypotheses are related to Lewis’s (1998) findings from his ethnographic study of a multi-organisational partnership in Bangladesh:

Partnerships are highly vulnerable to outside forces. Partnerships are affected by many external factors, including economic conditions, political climate, culture and ecology. They are also strongly influenced by support or obstruction from key individuals in positions of
power and authority. For example, sudden changes in key government personnel (such as moving the director of the government’s NGO bureau to another post) can alter the balance of NGO/government relationships at a stroke.

**Historical influences**
The significance of history as an issue influencing all aspects of NSP-government relationships is widely accepted across the literature. That said, ‘history’ is a rather ambiguous issue. The literature focuses on a range of aspects related to historical influences that are of particular relevance. Although this section is categorised separately as ‘historical influences’, it must be noted that many of the other issues discussed in this review are also related to historical influences (i.e. policies and institutions, legislative frameworks and state regimes, NSP origins and evolution, donor influences). These other issues have been categorised separately because it is important to provide distinct discussion space for each. Issues related to historical influences surface repeatedly throughout this review, influencing NSP-government relationships in different ways.

The majority of empirical studies that focus on relationships between NSPs and government, or multi-organisational relationships, or on NSPs’ relations with other NSPs discuss historical factors as influential determinants of the relationships. Several studies focus on historical aspects as the focus of their studies (Stone 1996; Sen 1999; Dorman 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis 2004; Mayhew 2005; Ramanath 2005), whereas others explore historical influences (to different degrees) as background information to the evolution of the relationship under study (Lewis 1998; Sood 2000; Tappin 2000; Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Wamai 2004; Pereira 2005; Thompson 2005; Batley 2006; Palmer 2006). The other empirical studies did not engage with historical issues explicitly (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Pettigrew 2003; Campos et al. 2004; Rose 2006; Sansom 2006; Ullah et al. 2006). This section continues with an overview of some general historical influences as linked with particular contexts in some of the empirical studies on NSP-government relationships referenced above.

Several studies provide rich detail of political, social, economic and/or cultural historical aspects influencing NSP-government relationships in various ways. For example, Hilhorst (2003) describes how the characteristics of NGOs’ various relationships (including relationships with government agencies) in the Cordillera region in the Philippines are derived from its local political history. Sen (1999) observes differences in NGO-government relationships in different localities in India, depending on the social and institutional histories of NGOs, specific local conditions, institutional behaviours, local politics and actions of local agents based on local politics and associational culture. Sen (1999) outlines five different historical hypotheses concerning the position of the government vis-à-vis NGOs in India. The most salient of the five hypotheses is the argument concerning the ‘shadow state’, a para-statal apparatus of voluntary organisations delivering basic services that are largely the responsibility of the state. Sood (2000) focuses specifically on the state of Gujarat, finding that, according to NGOs, the NGO-state culture in Gujarat is relatively positive because of the Gandhian movement that arose there, which gave greater recognition and strength to NGO movements. She argues that the local state history is significant.

Stone (1996) conducted a historical case study of the governance structure of a non-profit organisation in the USA that had evolved from an advocacy organisation into a multi-million dollar contractor with the government. The study illustrated how this non-profit organisation responded to multiple and contradictory institutional logics embedded in its relationships with state agencies, local communities of interest and its own past. Similarly, Ramanath’s research focused on the evolution of NGOs and their relationship with government agencies. This study of three NGOs in Mumbai, India, illustrates how each evolved from being an advocacy organisation to eventually delivering a variety of basic services. Brinkerhoff (2002) explored the historical background of
Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan finding that, as a result of the historical characteristics of each country (i.e. being part of the Soviet Union), both inherited a health sector that was centralised, hierarchical and standardised. She argues that, therefore, in terms of state-NGO relations, the ‘weight of the past hangs heavily over how the state interacts with new entities’ (Brinkerhoff 2002: 58).

**Legislative frameworks and policy objectives and standards**

Legislation and policy are closely related, but these categories can be used to define the space in which an NSP is able to manoeuvre and possibly collaborate with the government through service delivery and/or policy dialogue or other advocacy means. Beginning with legislative frameworks, Brinkerhoff (2002) argues that a supportive legal framework is central to providing for the emergence of viable NGOs and a vibrant civil society in which to create effective partnerships. Batley (2006) argues that a stable legal framework is the basis of a facilitating environment for non-state provision. However, such a basis was largely lacking in the six South Asian and sub-Saharan African countries that were studied. Similarly, Tappin (2000) also shows, in a research study of NGO-government relationships in Tuvalu, that although NGOs are ‘filling the gaps’ left by government, there was no formal legislation recognising NGOs in Tuvalu at the time the research was carried out. There is instead an umbrella NGO organisation called TANGO with which all NGOs in the country have registered. Tappin acknowledges that, in the context of a small island state, there may not be a need for formal regulation.

The core argument of Mayhew’s (2005) legislative and historical study of NSP-government relationships in Cambodia, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Nepal is that state legislation defines the environments in which NGOs operate, restricting or enabling NGO activities. State legislation evolves from particular political and economic contexts and is a function of local historical development. Mayhew argues that legislation can exacerbate or alleviate tensions and may act as a catalyst for debate on the role of NGOs, the extent to which they legitimately represent civil society, to whom they are accountable and how they can be protected. Mayhew found that donor agencies mandated ‘partnerships’ between NGOs and the government, but that this led to a high level of competition and tension between the actors. In general, the relative strengths of state legislation provoke different reactions. For example, in Nepal, government and legislative frameworks are weak; NGOs are very active and perceived as providing a critical input into development activities. In contrast, the government in Bangladesh reacts very differently to the strength of its NGO sector which it sees as a threat to its own hegemony. The four countries varied in their legislative basis and political environments, thus influencing the relative strengths of government and NGO sectors and in return affecting NSP-government relations.

The model below taken from Mayhew (2005) shows the variations of strength and weakness in NGO and government capacities. The ‘area of maximum social benefit of state/NGO relationships’ denotes situations where there is the highest levels of capacity in government and NGOs.
On the basis of their study of independent water and sanitation providers in ten African cities, Collignon and Vezina (2000) argue that independent providers are unhappy with the lack of legal recognition by municipal and water company officials of the services they perform. A fair institutional and legal environment would be more effective and offer more protection to independent providers.

The influence of policy objectives and standards as conditioning factors of NSP-government relationships varies with particular sectoral programmes, context and approaches taken by various stakeholders. Lewis (1998) argues that partnerships in Bangladesh can be understood partly as the product of changing policy agendas and dependency on the provision of international aid. Lewis argues that Northern NGOs operate in an increasingly complex policy environment that is going through three primary types of change: 1) A steady shift from direct implementation of projects by NGOs towards partnerships with local organisations; 2) An increase in direct donor funding; and 3) emphasis by donors on relief and emergency work in the 1990s, which is often at the expense of longer-term development activities.

The purpose of the research undertaken by Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom was to identify whether, how and under what conditions governments can work positively with NSPs to support and improve non-state provision of basic services in Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Three service sectors were selected for study: primary education and health care, basic water and sanitation. In each country and in each sector, the focus of the research was on identifying types of engagement between government and non-state providers, and analysing how these affect service delivery. Batley (2006) notes that principles of partnership were explicit in the current policies of the six countries studied. However, these formal policy commitments rested on layers of historical experience of policy instability and rivalry between government, NGOs and the private sector which led to distrust and lack of confidence that partnerships could work. Moran (2006) found that although there were legislation and policies concerning the status of NSPs in each country, there were rarely processes of stakeholder involvement that contributed toward the development of regulatory or contractual law. She argues that the dynamics of policy dialogue are partly determined by particular historical and political circumstances leading to harmonious or adversarial relationships. For example, in Malawi, a long history of service provision by faith-based and civil society organisations has 'conditioned' the state to amenable relationships with non-state providers.
In other articles on related research, Rose (2006) and Palmer (2006) provide examples of the influence of policy objectives in the health and education sectors on NSP-government relationships. Rose explains that questions arise of whether and how non-state providers can and should collaborate with the government to achieve Education for All (EFA) policy objectives. She argues that, across each of the six countries, formal policy dialogue has improved between NSPs and the government, partly as a response to EFA objectives that have united different interests and stakeholders around common goals. Palmer (2006) explains that in Bangladesh, the draft Health Nutrition Population Sector Plan (HNPSP) of 1998 reflected international health policy discourse by stressing the need to shift the role of government from one of ‘provider’ of health care to that of ‘steward’ of the sector collaborating with NSPs.

Campos et al. (2004) argue that there is no precise delineation between institutions (i.e. as formal rules and informal societal constraints) and policies (i.e. formal rules and enforcement). They apply a New Institutional Economics theoretical framework to examine the evolution of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) in the Northern Areas of Pakistan and the key factors for its institutional success: high degree of beneficiary participation, leadership characteristics and access to financial resources.

Stone (1996) discusses the influence of shifts in welfare state policies towards expanded use of private organisations to deliver public services. Wamai (2004) discusses a range of theoretical positions to better understand welfare state policies and the effects on relationships between government agencies and non-governmental organisations in Kenya and Finland: welfare state theory and two functionalist strands – the systems/structuralist approach and the institutionalist/functionalist approach. Both assert the function of the welfare state as social cohesion and economic reproduction. The functionalist view of social welfare helps to understand institutional diversity where each institution fulfils certain social functions.

**Globalisation**

Globalisation was identified as a separate but linked issue with other conditioning factors. Several authors highlight the significance of globalisation in influencing NSP-government relationships (Edwards and Hulme 1996; Lewis et al. 2003; Bouget and Prouteau 2005; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005; Thompson 2005). For example, Hulme and Edwards (1997) argue that it is due to international pressures that much of the provision of basic services by governments has been transferred to NGOs. Ramanath (2005) argues that, NGO-government interactions occur in the space created by the state in interaction with global pressures, which have been a major factor in spurring macroeconomic and structural reforms that have led to a scaling up of NGO activities.

Thompson (2005) used a ‘governmentality’ theoretical approach (see section 2.2) to examine the control mechanisms of devolution and managerial technologies in a relationship between two different levels of government in the UK. Governmentality argues that government systems have shifted from that of government to governance which is described as the increasing involvement of actors from outside the formal boundaries of the state in the process of governing (i.e. networks of inter-connected actors from the public private and voluntary sectors of supra-national and sub-national institutions have created multi-levelled systems of governing rather than the hierarchy dominated and defined by the central state). Thus, globalisation forces are a part of the system of governance and are integral to the dynamics of relationships within the government and beyond (e.g. NSPs).

Bouget and Prouteau (2005) claim that the effects of globalisation have led to greater institutional pluralism through a downsizing of governments and an expansion of the political space occupied by civil society. They argue that there is heightened pressure of competition between different agents and that the borders of power and competencies have shifted through the creation of new
policy arenas for the non-profit sector. Bouget and Prouteau argue that, as government agencies are increasingly subject to global influences, interacting with international bodies to address international issues, the question arises as to how NGOs fit in the development system. The increasing modes and effects of globalisation both constrict and broaden the possibilities for NGO-government interactions (Bouget and Prouteau 2002). Few studies, however, have focused on the impacts globalisation has had on national NSP-government relations.

In terms of research suggestions, 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.

Donor influences

Much of the relevant literature has argued that donor agencies have a direct impact on the dimensions and dynamics of NSP-government interactions through their control of funding and knowledge opportunities and constraints (Farrington 1992; Postma 1994; Huime and Edwards 1997; Fisher 1997; Fowler 1997; Lewis 1998, 2004; Lorgen 1998; White 1999; Lister 2000; Tappin 2000; Bouget and Prouteau 2002; Brinkerhoff 2002; Haque 2002, 2004; Kamat 2004; Kudva 2005; Pereira 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006; Nelson 2006; Seckinelgin 2006; Tvedt 2006; Ullah et al. 2006). The influence of donor agencies on the dynamics of NSP-government relationships may exist at many levels – incentives, design, objectives, implementation techniques and targets. Lewis and Opoku-Mensah (2006) argue that donor interactions between NGOs and the government have become increasingly complex, ambiguous and sophisticated, particularly due to devolution and globalisation.

White (1999) argues that the external influence of donors has been a critical factor behind the recent expansion of NSP-government partnerships. Brinkerhoff (2003) explains ‘it is unlikely that partnerships would have been achieved without the incentives of donor funding … the initial terms of the partnerships between government, NGOs and citizen groups pre-determined by donors’ (Brinkerhoff 2003: 115). Mayhew (2005) argues that donors have increasingly funded NGOs rather than governments and pressurise governments to build ‘partnerships’ with NGOs to deliver basic services and become a third party in development. Because of this pressure from donors, many countries have created legislation to enable this process. Palmer (2006) finds that governments and donors tend to focus most on NGOs when they seek collaboration with NSPs because of their supposed non-profit status, and the widespread suspicion of the for-profit sector. Kudva (2005) argues that uneasy partnerships between NSPs and government appear to be the norm in public service contractor models that are encouraged by government and foreign donor funding. White (1999) explains that NGOs and government are both allies and rivals, competing for donor funding as well as forming superficially collaborative partnerships to receive funding.

Lister (2000) used organisational theory to explore issues and processes of power (i.e. means of power, scope of power, amount of power and frameworks of power) in a relationship between a national NGO, international NGO and a bi-lateral donor agency. Lister found that the key element defining the base of power is the control of financial resources; donor organisations determine the parameters of activity as they control the resources. Lister found that the INGO was ‘doubly dependent’, first on the donor agency (financially and technically) and second on the NNGO (for legitimacy and information). The donor agency had operational influence over the INGO which had to create the necessary processes, procedures and timetables to fulfil the conditions expected by the donor agency. There were no effective mechanisms for the INGO to exert either structural or operational influence over the donor agency. In formal collaboration, the INGO and NNGO had
operational influence over activities although the INGO exerted structural influence over the NNGO. However, Lister found that the INGO went along with NNGO practices they did not agree with, possibly due to informal and personal relationships and/or the need for NNGO resources.

Lewis (1998) found that, in Bangladesh, inter-organisational relationships were affected by high dependency on foreign aid, reflecting ‘the technocratic language of instrumentalist solutions to complex development issues centring on power and distribution and the new donor emphasis on civil society and good governance’ (Lewis 1998: 336). Similarly, Ullah et al. (2006) argue that donor organisations are a large determining factor in any space provided for collaboration between government and NGOs.

Postma (1994) argues that aid environments are important factors in understanding NSP-government relationships, with particular focus on the restrictions and expectations by different donor organisations. Tvedt (2006) coins the term ‘Dostangosystem’ to draw attention to particular relational issues between ‘states, organisations, civil societies, and the ever-changing institutional, financial and conceptual interactions that take place between DONors, STAtes and NGOs’ (Tvedt 2006: 684). Tvedt claims NGO/state relations are organised as ‘a truly global system’. The ‘Dostango’ concept is meant as a non-normative, descriptive and empirically grounded term which is explained in more detail:

It should not be seen as a term that degrades the NGOs because of their dependency on state funds or their closeness to states. The Dostango-term does not carry with it the conventional, saddening story of organisational decay because of state connections, where formerly independent and strong NGOs gradually became co-opted by states and therefore inevitably and gradually degenerate. This is primarily because there is no such simple one-to-one relationship between financial dependence and autonomy, or ‘closeness’ to states and development potential. The use of the term thus also implies a rejection of essentialist distinctions between relational and organisational categories, like GONGO, QUANGO or AGONGO, and instead encourages historical analyses of state/NGO relations in different countries and regions, based on an understanding of the NGOs as living, ever-changing and not sedimentary phenomena, in relation to states and ‘beneficiaries’. (Tvedt 2006: 684)

State regime type
The dynamics of NSP-government relationships vary with different political regimes. The nature of the state and socio-political contexts under which NSPs emerge are essential for understanding NSP-government relationships (Postma 1994; Lewis 1998; Sen 1999; Dorman 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Wamai 2004; Pereira 2005; Ullah et al. 2006). For example, Brinkerhoff (2002) argues that in partnerships where semi-authoritarian states hold power, NGO partners are likely to be docile and cooperative. Wamai (2004) found that in democratic societies, NGOs in a relationship with government can simultaneously take on roles of opposition, partner and agent.

NSP-government relationships are the product of the space created by government over time. Ramanath’s (2005) study of housing in Mumbai illustrates that the government increasingly came to occupy a more decisive position in the ecosystem of NGO-government interactions and created the space for the emergence and institutionalisation of NGO strategies. Pereira (2005) argues that NGOs tend to follow a traditional path of getting closer to the state through a particular historical sequence of first working against the state, then collaborating, before being subsumed by the state. Pereira 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. In order to understand change in NGOs it is important to understand the political economy in which they evolve as the market is not separated from the state.
Moran (2006) argues that some level of recognition of NSPs by the state is the basis of any positive dialogue or intervention. However, she explains that the official recognition of NSPs, particularly those that are smaller and less formal, can be politically difficult, especially where the interests of powerful professional groups may be threatened. Sansom (2006) explains that the lack of formal recognition of NSPs by government agencies is a key limiting factor to more productive forms of engagement. If governments and utilities do not formally recognise and engage positively with NSPs, there is a clear risk of collusion between water utility staff and informal NSPs, which increases the cost of water to consumers. Palmer (2006) finds that the governments of each of the six countries represented in her research appeared to be more willing to engage with NGOs than with for-profit organizations, because of their perceived shared concern for public action.

Sen (1999) argues that governments are particularly distrustful of NGOs if the sector engenders political discontent and provides organisational channels through which opposition can be mounted against incumbent regimes. Sen explains that governments are particularly likely to scrutinise NGOs when issues of national sovereignty or state security are felt to be at stake. Sood (2000) argues that ‘empowerment NGOs’ and ‘support NGOs’ threaten the government because they can appear to challenge the government’s control and power over its financial and material resources. There is often government resentment at the amount of funding NGOs receive from donors. Mayhew (2005) explains that government may wish to regulate or restrict NGOs when they feel that NGOs siphon off resources that might otherwise have come to the government or where they are afraid that NGOs could challenge government ideology.

Postma (1994) argues for the importance of political conditions in determining dynamics between government agencies and NGOs. Postma (1994) contends that the effects of post-colonial influences (i.e. the superimposition of an inorganic governing model and the dismemberment of decentralised decision-making bodies) have had implications for state/society relationships and the position and role of NGOs within those relationships. Pereira (2005) found that since democratic restoration in Chile and Uruguay, the state has taken advantage of the expertise of NGOs in three ways: cooptation of personnel formerly working for NGOs; cooptation of knowledge appropriated by means of direct service delivery, training of public personnel, consultancy services, etc.; and advocacy activities that put pressure from below, forcing the state to expand and enforce rights and entitlements.

### 3.2 Nature of the organisation

This section of the review covers the nature of the organisations in an NSP-government relationship: Different levels of government, NSPs and their origins and values; the internal management of NSPs; boundaries; civil society and the state; networks, alliances, coalitions, and linkages of NSPs with government agencies; key individuals or leaders. These issues are directly relevant to the categories depicted in the flow diagram, although they are sometimes referred to differently – because the review uses the terminology of the literature.

- Three of the four categories in the flow diagram, (i.e. interests, goals, ideologies, identities and understandings; decision-making structures: hierarchy, participation, market; and techniques of staff control and incentives) are related to the following issues identified in this section on the nature of the organisation: Different levels of government; NSPs and their origins and values; internal management of NSPs; and key individuals/leaders.
- The category in the flow diagram covering resources: funding, social capital (networks), knowledge in the flow diagram relates to the issues of boundaries; civil society and the state; networks, alliances, coalitions, linkages of NSPs and government agencies. However, the headings used in the review are more specific to issues identified in the literature.
This section begins by focusing further on the nature of the government before moving on to NSPs and the broader issue of boundaries that is related to the remaining issues covered in this section.

**Different levels of government**

Dynamics of NSP-government relationships are different at different levels of government (Collignon and Vezina 2000; Clark 1997; Sen 1999; Wamai 2004; Hilhorst 2003; Krishna 2003; Menondoca 2005). Hilhorst (2003) argues against generalising about the state as a unitary phenomenon. In her three-year ethnographic study of NGOs in the Philippines, Hilhorst (2003) focused on how relationships between NGOs and the state evolve locally through the portrayal of a village at the centre of a set of concentric circles representing political arenas in the village, region, province, country and globalised world of international development.

Clark (1997) places emphasis on the differences between NGO-government relationships at the central and local levels. He argues that there are often weak relationships between the government and NGOs at the central level but that they are stronger at the local level. Sen (1999) also argues that there are more obvious differences in NSP-government relationships at the local level than at the central level; these relate to historical dynamics, local conditions, institutional behaviours, local politics and the role of key individuals. He argues that the underlying theme in NSP-government relationships at the local level in India is the hostility of politicians, party workers, local elites, lower level bureaucrats and employees of government towards NGO activities. Sen explains that differences can be observed by examining the interaction of local government and NGOs in various policy arenas such as the social and economic advancement of women and children, education, health and literacy, housing, etc.

Examining relationships between different levels of government in the UK, Thompson (2005) argues that the internal organisation of the government has become more complex and ‘multi-levelled’ as sub-and supra national institutions partially usurp the competencies of the central government. The central government now relies on a complex network of government institutions that are defined both by their geographical territories and functional remit. Thompson claims that there are few theoretically informed analyses of relations between institutions acting at different government levels. He argues for the importance of understanding the linkages between the shift to a multi-levelled system within government and the growing reliance on non-state actors in the process of governing. Thompson explains that, while governing processes increasingly rely on actors from above and beyond the nation state, the machinery of central government remains crucial to political regulation and in determining the kinds of policies and interventions that act upon rural localities.

Wamai (2004) identifies three main levels of NSP-government interactions in Kenya: national; regional; and local. In addition, Wamai (2004) categorised these levels into three different dimensions: human resources; financial resources; policy-making. Wamai found that the intensity of NSP-government collaboration is greater at the municipal/district level than at the provincial level in Kenya and Finland. Kudva (2005) claims that NSP-government relationships are shaped by changes in state-society relationships and by the position of the government as regulator (requiring NGOs to register), funder (state seeks to selectively collaborate with groups that can elicit people’s participation and make government programmes more efficient and effective), and political force (strong community-based NGOs are potential local power structures). These different government positions provide multiple points of contact and possibilities for conflict and collaboration with NGOs.

Menondoca (2005) examines decentralised social policies and their impacts on relationships between the state and civil society in Brazil using Evans’ (1996) concepts of synergy (i.e. embeddedness and complementarity). Findings indicate that, although decentralisation did give more autonomy to local governments which therefore led to deeper relationships with civil society
organisations, it transferred mainly tasks and responsibility rather than power. Menondoca therefore concluded that it was difficult to produce synergistic relationships.

Pereira (2005) focuses on the effects decentralisation is having on relationships between NGOs and different levels of government in Chile and Uruguay. Pereira finds that in both countries the participation of community organisations in the provision of basic services creates the conditions for clientelism and reinforces dependency on government. This raises the question whether greater community participation through decentralisation has occurred for the benefit of local authorities or local community empowerment. In general, Pereira finds that smaller NGOs are usually left out of funding by central government, so they turn to local municipal sources. Larger NGOs have tended to turn to central government agencies and INGOs for funding (Pereira 2005).

**NSPs: origins and values**

The foundational values and the meanings NSPs ascribe to ‘public action’ (or social development objectives) condition an organisation’s overall agenda as well as the dynamics of its relationships with other organisations (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Stone 1996; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Streeten 1997; Coston 1998; Fowler 1997, 1998; Najam 2000; Brinkerhoff 2002; Nelson 2006). Stone argues that an NGO’s original structure and values remain embedded in it even with the growth of government contractual relationships. Farrington and Bebbington (1992) explain that the origins of NGOs vary widely and have a strong bearing on the type and extent of potential collaboration with government. For example, some NGOs formed in opposition to government’s approach to the rural poor; others as a reaction to government support for or indifference to corruption, authoritarianism or patronage. Many NGOs are left-leaning but comprised of middle class members who are quite separate from the poor. Brinkerhoff (2002) argues that NGOs established by government will pursue objectives that fit closely with the desires of their creators.

Several sources argue that the founding and development of NGOs can often be attributed to key individuals who have charismatic qualities. Sen (1999) argues that individuals have various motivations for forming and/or joining NGOs. These motivations can lead to different attitudes, behaviours and interactions between NGOs and government agencies. The role of individuals is a crucial determining factor in NSP-government relationships from both an organisational and a network perspective as they comprise and influence the social history of an NSP (Hulme and Edwards 1997; Wood 1997; Sen 1999; White 1999; Lister 2000; Tappin 2000; Corder 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Hailey and James 2002; Bebbington et al. 2003; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Mageli 2005; Ramanath 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006; Tvedt 2006).

Ramanath’s (2005) study of the evolution of three NGO-government relationships in Mumbai in the housing sector found that NGO strategies had evolved towards greater complexity and sophistication in their interaction with the government and other actors in the housing field. Similar to species within an ecosystem, Ramanath found that there is no normative direction of evolution within each of the NGOs. Each NGO faced different internal and external forces that promoted, prevented or otherwise shaped its attempts to make a ‘major’ shift in housing strategies through unique sets of constraints arising from path dependent factors. Each NGO also coped differently with uncertainties caused by variations in its resource environment. Ramanath suggests that a heterogeneous landscape of NGO-government housing strategies and tactics found in their formative years is likely to persist.

Wamai (2004) explains that the development of institutions (e.g. NGOs) in society is mediated by specific histories that shape the choices made in patronising specific service systems. NGOs are not isolated phenomena but an integral part of a social system whose role and scale is a by-product of a complex set of historical forces. For example, Sen (1999) discusses the history of the notion of ‘NGOs’ (as a term) over the past 20 years as organisations that are formed by professionals or quasi-professionals from the middle or lower classes either to work with or serve
Brainard and Siplon (2002) and Kamat (2004) argue that different NGOs (i.e. community-based organisations, grassroots organisations and/or advocacy NGOs) generate different responses from government. For example, CBOs are often viewed as the most effective catalyst for ‘bottom-up’ development but are often dependent on technical expertise from the government. Advocacy NGOs tend to be focused on raising public awareness on a variety of issues and are often in a competitive or conflictual relationship with the government. Batley (2006) notes that large NGOs often act as intermediaries on behalf of small NGOs involved in partnerships with government.

Sood (2000) also found that there are distinctions about which NGOs governments will work with due to various levels of proximity between different types of NGOs and government. Sood argues that, in general, government officials tend to prefer not to work with small NGOs. This links with Hulme and Edwards’ (1997) argument that larger NGOs tend to have less autonomy than smaller NGOs. Kilby (1998) cites Anangwe (1995) to describe the heavy-handedness of the Kenyan government in its relationship with larger NGOs working in urban sanitation in Nairobi. Smaller NGOs working in remoter rural areas are allowed to operate with a greater degree of autonomy. This finding agrees with those of Hulme and Edwards (1997), Lorgen (1998) and Sood (2000) and reinforces the importance of context in conditioning NSP-government relationships (White 1999; Matlin 2001; Bebbington et al. 2003; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Selsky and Parker 2005; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006).

**Internal management of NSPs**

Understanding the internal power dynamics, management and decision-making processes of NSPs and government agencies is important to understanding the dynamics of relationships (Stone 1996; Fisher 1997; Wood 1997; White 1999; Dorfman 2001; Hailey and James 2002; Mercer 2002; Bebbington et al. 2003; Lewis 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Mageli 2005; Ramanath 2005). Dorman argues that pressures such as the agendas of staff, members and trustees affect how NGOs function and then affect the ways NGOs relate to the state and other NGOs. Dorman proposes that NGOs need to be examined from the inside. This argument emerged as a result of Dorman’s observation that most studies of NGOs in Africa evaluate them as development organisations, rarely examining the dynamics of NGO decision-making other than to categorise them as ‘donor-driven’ or ‘GONGOs’.

Ramanath (2005) contends that NGO behaviour is shaped internally through strategic choices in response to external forces of public policy. Lewis (2003) claims that it is crucial to interpret NGOs’ internal and external operating environments, including the cultural norms that exist within and beyond organisational boundaries. The context in which NGOs operate is risky, conflict-prone and unstable, especially in failing states. The context may also contain particular cultural challenges and dimensions of management; many NGOs work in communities very different from themselves and may increasingly include staff from a wide range of backgrounds. NGOs may take on a range of tasks that need to be managed in accordance with the specific features of the activity (often in different development sectors), the relationships it seeks to maintain, and the internal structures and process of the organisation itself (Lewis 2003). Fisher (1997) argues for the importance of ‘unpacking the micro-politics of NGOs’ to see them as fragmented sites that have multiple connections.

Focusing internally, Stone (1996) explains that attention to governance structures in NGOs is important because it is where decisions are made concerning direction, accountability and external relationships. Stone focuses on the role of boards and at the points they become especially critical to their organisations. For example, Stone argues that managers of NGOs often view their board as irrelevant although boards often have a significant role in raising money, particularly through their ties with political elites.
In spite of the comparative advantage claim that NGOs tend to be less hierarchically managed than government agencies, Mercer (2002) argues that NGOs are not necessarily democratic within their own institutions; rather it is common that they are authoritarian, competitive, classist and elitist. Wood (1997) and White (1999) claim similarly: hierarchy often exists within and between NGOs and is reinforced through predominant cultural practices. Furthermore, as Mercer argues, NGOs are often staffed by urban middle-class elites with no roots in under-privileged areas. Wood (1997: 88) argues that, within NGOs, vertical lines of communication tend to replace horizontal ones with only the leaders having a sense of the whole picture and staff ceasing ‘to be generalists as sections and divisions are created to cope with the increasing specialisms and complexity of the programme’. Wood explains that rigid NGO leadership makes it nearly impossible to create a management structure that engenders participatory decision-making, in spite of the fact that the leader often promotes it. There tends to be a contradiction in that the means are not consistent with the envisaged ends.

One method of confronting the contradiction of vertical management and leadership in NGOs is by instilling an environment of open reflection and learning within the organisation. Hailey and James (2002) carried out an intensive two-year research study that analysed the role of leadership, learning and knowledge-creation in the largest NGOs in Bangladesh (BRAC and Proshika), India (AKRSP, BAIF and Sadguru) and Pakistan (AKRSP, IUCN, Sungi). This study analysed how the NGOs managed their external relations, handled strategic planning processes and developed their organisational culture, and how they were shaped by the vision, commitment and character of their founding leader. Among its findings, Hailey and James’ study suggests that an NGO’s ability to learn is dependent on its organisational culture (particularly in regard to its culture of learning), which is in turn dependent primarily on the existence of a ‘learning leader’. Ramanath (2005) explored the dynamics within NGOs through the concept of ‘organisational learning’. Factors included the NGOs’ strategies for adapting to work with external agencies (i.e. government), degree of internal criticism, amount of research commissioned, monitoring and evaluation systems, number of reflective documents produced, improvements in organisational technology, improvements in structure, organisation and methods of coordination, and development of understanding of who is good at what within the organisation. (Ramanath 2005: 428)

Hilhorst (2003), Bebbington et al. (2003) and Lewis et al. (2003) each discuss how the notion of ‘culture’ provides insight into the internal dynamics of organisations. Hilhorst argues for the value of using the notion of culture to understand dynamics within and between organisations. She argues against the application of culture as an independent variable, but rather sees culture as something an organisation ‘is’. This perspective of culture shifts away from concerns about what organisations accomplish and how efficiently they do so to what it means to be organised within that particular organisation. Hilhorst (2003) explains that culture becomes a quest for understanding how things, events and interactions come to be meaningful. Bebbington et al. (2003) and Lewis et al. (2003) argue for the importance of understanding the existence of multiple cultures within institutions (i.e. sub-groups with sub-cultures). These multiple cultures struggle for access to resources, legitimacy of some types of knowledge over others, different language uses, participation in decision-making, etc.

Mageli (2005) and Hilhorst (2003) carried out organisational ethnographies. Mageli’s (2005) ethnographic study of an NGO (‘Unnayan’ in Kolkata) demonstrated that staff relationships within Unnayan are often contradictory, shifting and ambivalent, situated within flows of knowledge, information and ideas. Mageli found that the fluidity of internal relationships had a significant impact on relationships external to the organisation. In her study of an NGO in the Philippines, Hilhorst (2003) explains the range of tensions and shifting alliances in the organisation associated with factors including: political involvement; family background and place of origin (i.e. commitment and reference to indigenous origins, language used, social construction of women); kinship and marriage (i.e. where family members, husband/wife works), motherhood, marriage and sexuality
(i.e. singles versus those that are married, economic differentiation and livelihood, importance of management in social networks). Aside from differing backgrounds and family alliances, Hilhorst (2003) found that internal NGO tensions affect organisational management and staff expectations, ideological interpretations of NGO activities, ideological constructions about clients, and different ways of behaving with local men and women where the NGO was working.

3.3 Boundaries

A primary issue of NSP-government relationship is that of the definition of boundaries – of the organisations themselves, between civil society and the government, within and between networks, coalitions and alliances of various organisations, and dimensions of the NSP-government relationship (Fisher 1997; Lewis 1998, 2003, 2004; Mercer 2002; Pettigrew 2003; Kamat 2004; Wamai 2004; Mayhew 2005; Osborne et al. 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006; Nelson 2006; Tvedt 2006). The questions where NSPs begin and end, and what influences their behaviours and actions, both within the organisation and their external relationships and networks, are dependent upon the perspective one adopts toward a range of issues associated with NSPs. The next section of this review highlights boundary perspectives on civil society, networks and key individuals as a common starting point on the characteristics of NSPs and their relationships.

Pettigrew (2003: 376) claims that a partnership or formal relationship established between organisations is the ‘ultimate postmodern organization, characterized by fluidity, uncertainty, ambiguity, discontinuity’. Moran (2006) argues that defining the non-state sector is not straightforward, the boundaries between state and NSPs are blurred. Wamai (2004) argues that in practice, relationships between NGOs and the government are not defined between the sectors but between government agencies, individuals in the government, individual NGOs or a small group of well-connected NGOs. Lewis (1998) explains that research on NGO relationships with other NGOs or government agencies needs to identify the points where there are partnership linkages, how that linkage has occurred and continues to occur (i.e. changes in linkages and their mechanisms over time). Lewis’s (1998) argument is based on his ethnographic research on a multi-agency partnership on an aqua-culture project in Bangladesh in which he found that the partnership had a range of inter-agency linkages at various levels: farmers with farmers; farmers with NGO staff; farmers with researchers and local government staff, large NGOs with small NGOs, NGO staff with the research institute and different levels of government with researchers and NGO staff.

Civil society and the state: the position of NSPs

The issue of civil society in relation to understanding NSP-government relationships centres on a range of factors in any given context: the definition of what constitutes civil society, the history of struggles within civil society and between civil society and the government, the perceived boundaries of civil society, and the roles that civil society assumes (Fisher 1997; White 1999; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Mercer 2002; Mohan 2002; Kamat 2004; Lewis 2004; Mayhew 2005; Osborne et al. 2005). Mayhew (2005) argues that state legislation and subsequent space for NGOs is partly a function of local definitions and perceptions of civil society. Dorman (2001) argues that government and civil society are fluid and fragmentary rather than monolithic and fixed. White (1999) explains that, because neither the state nor civil society is monolithic, it is necessary to examine the ways in which specific associations and organisations within civil society interact with different levels of government. Sood (2000) reflects on the difficulties of categorising civil society/NGO-government relationships as they are embedded within complex and intertwining alliances.

The boundaries of civil society are difficult to define. Mohan (2002) argues that conceptual criticisms of civil society rest upon ontological questions of whether civil society is separate from
the state. Fisher (1997) argues that civil society is often seen as a segment of society that influences the state, interacts with the state, but is distinct from it. NGOs exist somewhere in the midst of these influences and interactions between and within civil society and the government. Lewis (2004) explains that the tendency to equate NGOs with civil society obscures the history of state-society struggles. Lewis (2004) found, through his ethnographic research on civil society in Bangladesh, that the boundaries between state and civil society are ambiguous, constantly shifting through family ties, contracting relationships and overlapping dependencies.

Kamat (2004) contends that constructing the NGO debate as ‘state versus civil society’ is analytically misleading as NGOs are as much a part of remaking state institutions and process as they are part of reconfiguring civil society. Lewis (2004) argues there is a normative tendency to view civil society as a ‘good thing’ and over-simplify all NGOs as equated with ‘civil society’ whilst ignoring other organisations and forms of action. Mercer (2002) explains that a commonly held view is that NGOs are a core part of civil society and help strengthen democratic processes. However, Mercer argues that the capacity of NGOs to fulfil their democratic role in civil society is circumscribed by political and economic forces that are mediated through governments and donor agencies. Mercer’s argument highlights not only the influence of government agencies on NGOs, but also the interconnectedness of influences from donor agencies, civil society on a broader scale and market forces.

Lewis (2004) argues for a re-conceptualisation of civil society both as a ‘system’ (i.e. institutional structure and practices) and as an ‘idea’ (i.e. projected and believed by different people at different levels of society and at different moments in history). This dichotomy emerged from an ethnographic study undertaken by Lewis on civil society in Bangladesh. The motives behind Lewis’s study were to examine the perceived fragility of civil society and whether or not the concept had value outside the ‘West’ where the notion of civil society was initially conceptualised. Lewis (2004) contends that civil society in Bangladesh can be better understood as a locally adapted idea acknowledging the role of power relations and blurring of boundaries between civil society, household and kin networks, the state and the market.

Sood (2000) and Osborne et al. (2005) argue for the importance of understand civil society in context. In her research study on NSP-government relations in water distribution in Gujarat, India, Sood argues for the importance of focusing on the distinction between state and civil society through an approach that is driven by context-specific attributes (i.e. historical, social and cultural characteristics). She argues that there are problems with conceptual and theoretical understandings of civil society and NGOs’ role in it as most literature refers to both as in opposition to the state. Furthermore, specific associations and organisations within civil society interact with different manifestations of the state at different levels of government with different roles and ideologies. Osborne et al. (2005) also argue for the importance of a contextually-relevant notion of civil society that can be understood as a cluster of linked, albeit divergent, concepts by different stakeholders rather than a unified system. This argument emerged from a contextually-derived view of civil society in post-communist Hungary. Civil society was an aspiration of opposition groups during the Communist era, but these groups have since transformed into various organisational formations.

**Networks, alliances, coalitions, and linkages of NSPs with government agencies**
Linked to the overarching issue of boundaries, Hulme and Edwards (1997) argue for the importance of mapping out NSP and government networks. Mageli (2005) also maintains that knowing about alliances and networks may contribute to our understanding of how NGOs function. Tvedt (2006) recently claimed that the connections, networks and alliances between NSPs, donors, states and researchers/consultants have hardly been researched. Alliances and networks that are associated with NSP-government relationships vary with the great diversity of types of NSPs, including international, national and local NSPs. This reinforces the multi-dimensionality

Hilhorst (2003) argues that normative literature on NGOs tends to be limited by the ‘implicit assumption that NGOs constitute a single reality’ (Hilhorst 2003: 3). However, Fisher (1997) argues that the proliferation of NGOs has coincided with NGOs taking on new functions within an increasingly complex web of relationships among different institutions (i.e. government and NSPs). Mageli (2005) argues that NGOs are fluid entities taking many forms. Similarly, Hulme and Edwards (1997) claim that NGOs are not entities with clear boundaries, but ‘open systems’ with a series of relationships, alliances, coalitions and networks operating through varying degrees and methods of influence and control. These assertions reflect a range of debates on the multi-dimensional aspects and unresolved boundaries of NSPs as well as the extent and characteristics of the networks, coalitions and linkages associated with NSPs (Sanyal 1994; Stone 1996; Fisher 1997; Fowler 1997; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Lorgen 1998; Zaidi 1999; Najam 2000; Brainard and Siplon 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Mercer 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Kamat 2004; Henry et al. 2005; Mageli 2005; Ramanath 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006; Nelson 2006; Tvedt 2006).

Several ethnographic empirical studies have captured the fluidity of organisations and networks. Hilhorst’s (2003) study of an NGO in the Philippines found that NGOs are fragmented organisations with fluctuating social networks, and argued that ‘it is in social networks that actors shape and play out the meaning of their organisation’. Hilhorst (2003) explains that social networks are formed around several different elements through shifting constellations within and external to the office that cannot be reduced to two or three networks. Through fieldwork in an NGO (Unnayan) in Kolkata, India, Mageli (2005) discovered an ‘organisational universe’ that was characterised by numerous alliances and subgroups that were constantly formed and reformed across or within fragile and fluid boundaries internal and external to Unnayan. Mageli describes the impossibility of separating Unnayan from the non-NGO world as workers and projects related to Unnayan did not constitute a bounded entity but were intimately woven into political and institutional systems across Kolkata. Unnayan’s only point of cohesion was at the very initial stages of its existence. As time has passed, Mageli explains that Unnayan has become increasingly complex with numerous individual and organisational alliances, agendas and loyalties in the NGO and non-NGO world that sometimes behave in conflict with organisational goals meant to unite them. Mageli claims that organisational fluidity takes several forms; as an individual’s life changes, the inclination to participate in development activities also changes. But, as Mageli argues, ‘concepts such as NGOs, the state, authorities, outside agencies, the poor, political parties and so on continue to be employed in development discourse in a manner which suggests their bounded nature’ (Mageli 2005: 265). Pettigrew (2003) also found in her action research study on a multi-organisational relationship in the UK that the historicity of tensions amongst different individuals and organisations was based on past informal relationships, the formation and reformation of coalitions and factions with their own agendas.

Mercer (2002) notes that there is a lack of unity amongst NGOs, divided and fragmented by class, religion, and political affiliation. In addition, NGOs tend to compete with each other for funding. However, Kapoor (2005) describes the dependency between international NGOs and local NGOs. Local NGOs are often contracted by international NGOs to carry out projects. Kapoor (2005) highlights several problems resulting from this dependency; small NGOs sometimes lose their...
credibility with partner villages as they are not effective in addressing primary concerns and this loss of credibility is de-motivating to committed social activists and damages people-centred processes. Postma’s (1994) research study comparing INGO and NGO relationships in Mali and Nigeria revealed power imbalances during decision-making and implementation phases of the partnership. For example, Postma describes how, during a meeting between partners, northern NGOs did most talking, while local NGOs hardly spoke. Furthermore, NGOs tend to be blamed if the project goes wrong but are not given credit if it goes right.

Henry et al. (2005) argue that there is a diversity of theories to understanding networks. Wamai (2004) for example, uses the concept of ‘focal organisation’ to describe how NGOs are linked with other organisations, individuals, households, other NGOs, donors, business, state. Henry et al. explain that the dominant discipline used to understand networks is organisational studies, in which networks are conceptualised as strategically-orientated relationships based on a form of exchange distinct from markets and hierarchies with horizontal patterns of exchange involving indefinite transactions. The opposing theoretical view of Henry et al. is that networks are naturally hierarchical and governed by a series of power relationships. They argue that there is no uniform degree of commitment and/or trust within networks. Yet, there is reciprocity: actors and institutions are affected by networks and in return affect the network. Sood (2000) argues that the effectiveness of networks essentially depends on the interest, time and enthusiasm that members contribute to the organisation. She explains that members are often confused as to how the network actually works, and that it is meant as a reciprocal process rather than an extractive one.

Key individuals/leaders
Lister (2000), Corder (2001) and Bebbington et al. (2003) explain that, although context is important as it influences actions at an organisational level, it does not determine, but rather conditions, NSP-government relationships. Individual actors are also critical as active agents influencing all aspects of relationships within and between NSPs, other civil society organisations, government and donors (Hulme and Edwards 1997; Wood 1997; White 1999; Lister 2000; Tappin 2000; Brinkerhoff 2002; Bebbington et al. 2003; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis 2003; Campos et al. 2004; Mageli 2005; Ramanath 2005; Tvedt 2006). For example, Tappin emphasises the power of personality as a determining factor in NSP-government relationships in Tuvalu, and Brinkerhoff (2002) argues that successful initiation and continuation of social development reforms in general depend upon the actions of key individuals and groups who are ‘champions of change’. The second set of hypotheses driving the research carried out by Campos et al. in Pakistan, referred to specific characteristics of village organisation (VO) managers as leaders: if the manager has any formal education, the VO should perform better; and if the manager has any previous small business experience, the VO is more likely to succeed.

Lister (2000) argues that inter-organisational relationships between NGOs and other organisations are most often based on personal (informal) relationships. Similarly, White (1999) argues that larger NGOs tend to form alliances having considerable influence on each other through key individuals. Hulme and Edwards (1997) contend that formal links between NGOs and the state worked best where there were longstanding informal contacts and staff transfers.

Lister (2000) found that the dominant mechanism for linkage and collaboration between organisations is individual relationships between key actors at the central level, particularly between the INGO and NGOs. Lister argues that organisational perspectives give limited understanding of partnerships and that the role of personal relationships is not adequately taken into account in management theory. Studies also tend to ignore the historical and socio-political role of individuals in the development of specific organisations and their alliances, networks and relationships. Similarly, Wood (1997) and Lewis (2003) note the ‘chameleon-like’ qualities of NGO leaders who are able to maintain leadership within their own organisations as it grows, as well as establish and continue contact with key individuals and organisations from different sectors.
Ramanath used the ‘nature of leadership’ as one of her key categories. This category highlights the ‘distribution of authority in and between organisations, decision-making authority of members and nature of control exercised by dominant coalitions within each organization’ (Ramanath 2005: 428). She found that, in terms of leadership, not only do leaders respond to changes in their institutional environment, but they also play an active role in strategically shaping their own contexts.

Ethnographic research studies such as those by Mageli (2005), Bebbington et al. (2003), Hilhorst (2003) and Lewis’s current ESRC NGPA study emphasise the role of individuals in organisational and inter-organisational evolution. Mageli’s study of an NGO in Kolkata found that as the NGO grew, its fluidity was based strongly on the various motives of individuals to engage in activities within the organisation or other alliances external to the organisation. Bebbington et al. argue that where innovation does occur, it is because of the personal attributes and the professional and personal backgrounds of the particular task managers involved. Hilhorst argues that determining the level of ‘manoeuvring’ an NGO can exercise in its relationships with other organisations requires an understanding of how far NGO staff members can get others to internalise their ideas and follow proposed actions. For example, Hilhorst found that the staff of NGOs originating from the province in which they work, their tribal affiliation and family standing may cut across political differences in shaping relations with different levels of government. Also NGO staff members have often spent time working in government agencies.

Tvedt (2006), in his article arguing for ‘Dostango’ approach to understanding relationships, emphasises the role of ‘elite circulation’ in the global aid system. Elite circulation is enabled by the role of government in permeating organisations and research institutes, while researchers and leaders of research organisations have broken the government’s monopoly on foreign funding and foreign policy. Individual elite members are recruited into NGOs, research institutions, grassroot social movements, the UN and other donor agencies, and often continue to circulate from one institution to another and back again. Due to these transfers, individuals are found to share ideological and practical positions on all sides of the table. Tvedt argues that achievements by individuals within the elite circulation system are related to the ability to exploit the range of top positions within institutional partnerships. The legitimacy of the ‘elite’ is maintained by the fact that organisations and institutions in the global aid system share a common culture. Dorman (2001) also finds that NGO elites use the language of the dominant groups and work within their power structures, while sometimes challenging policy. They are therefore not alien to the state and its discourses of development, further emphasising the lack of distinction between civil society and the state.

3.4 Agendas of engagement

This section covers issues related to the ‘agendas of engagement’ of NSPs and government agencies collaborating to provide services. Our approach suggests that collaborating agencies (a) bring their own public policy (or public action) commitments to the relationship, and (b) have incentives to collaborate that arise from the influences that have formed them. The literature suggests the following issues that are explored in this section: incentives for collaboration, pre-conditions for successful collaboration and the design of the relationship. These issues relate directly to one of the categories depicted in the research flow diagram (i.e. Incentives to collaborate) whilst the other category (Definition of public action) is related indirectly to the other two issues. Apart from the research carried out by Batley, Palmer, Rose and Sansom and reported in their 2006 articles, only one study (Welle 2001) specifically addresses the ‘definition of public action’ as an issue influencing the dynamics of an NSP-government relationship.
Incentives for collaboration

The incentives for NSPs and government agencies to collaborate in providing basic services include material and non-material features that are historically and contextually dependent (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Sen 1999; White 1999; Lister 2000; Tappin 2000; Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Wamai 2004; Mageli 2005; Ramanath 2005; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006; Ullah et al. 2006). Farrington and Bebbington (1992), for example, argue that collaborative interests may come from different points across the ideological spectrum so that different actors seek differing outcomes and have divergent views on how much responsibility the government should assume (e.g. on which subsidies should go to which groups). Welle (2001) divides incentives for collaboration into ‘symbolic’ (i.e. contractual) or ‘real’ (i.e. greater dialogue, trust and transparency). Ullah et al. (2006), on the other hand, argue that NGOs and government agencies have common goals and visions with respect to social sector development, although with very different institutional approaches.

Dorman (2001), Rose (2006) and Palmer (2006) argue that NSPs are driven to engage in government relationships to mobilise further resources and/or establish greater influence at the macro level. Dorman demonstrates how the Zimbabwean ruling party used the state to set up a pattern of authoritarian rule in which NGOs and other civil society groups sought to be included in the hegemonic framework of the ruling élites. Dorman argues that, while NGOs may not always have accepted the government’s entire agenda, few wanted to be excluded from access to spoils, which are social and cultural as well as material. Rose (2006) found that the most common experience of government-initiated involvement with NSPs is through the means of registration and regulation. When NSPs instigate engagement it is with the intention of mobilising resources, or influencing the policy agenda. That said, Rose found that, in the education sector (in six countries of Africa and South Asia), many NSPs appeared to be operating independently of government. Palmer (2006) found that, with the exception of donor-initiated projects to contract out health services, governments’ approach to NSPs in health was ‘piecemeal’. She argues that NGOs were keen to ‘fill the gaps’ in service provision but also keen to obtain resources from donors and/or the government. Palmer explains that in some cases NGOs described how their traditional funding sources had declined in recent years, and that their willingness to be contracted by government may be a result of this general trend.

Pre-conditions for successful collaboration

The literature indicates the pre-conditions for establishing ‘successful’ collaboration between NSPs and government agencies (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Postma 1994; Lewis 1998; Lister 2000; Dorman 2001; Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Mayhew 2005; Moran 2006; Sansom 2006; Ullah et al. 2006). As mentioned previously in this review, the willingness and capacity of the government to work with NSPs is necessary (Brinkerhoff 2002; Moran 2006). Sansom (2006) describes the increasing level of government capacity required to move from (i) basic levels of engagement, to (ii) engaging in dialogue and entering into short-term contracts, and (iii) entering into long term agreements and contracts. Mayhew (2005) suggests three criteria for legislation and negotiation to be effective: government accountability and capacity to develop and enforce policies to regulate NGO quality and accountability; a competent and independent NGO sector able to legitimately represent civil society; and the political will to engage in an open and constructive manner.

Beyond questions of capacity, Batley (2006) describes the history of distrust, rivalry, policy unreliability and legal instability between government and NSPs that often frustrate the policy intent of partnerships. Farrington and Bebbington (1992) and Hulme and Edwards (1997) argue that there is often a lack of emphasis on the importance of pre-conditions for successful collaboration, including prior informal contacts that are necessary to build up mutual trust. Welle (2001) found through an empirical study comparing an NGO’s relationships in Ghana, that pre-conditions of
successful relationships are based on a foundation of shared values and common objectives of the actors involved. Ullah et al. (2006) list pre-conditions for successful collaboration as mutual respect and trust; recognition of mutual strengths, values and comparative advantages; favourable policies, laws and regulatory frameworks; effective mechanisms to monitor, measure and learn; transparency and accountability; involvement of all stakeholders at every step; and continued commitment of collaborating partners. Postma (1994) found, through an empirical study on a relationship between INGOs and national NGOs in Mali and Nigeria, that both parties brought up the importance of mutual trust and respect, transparency, complementary strengths, reciprocal accountability, joint decision-making and a two-way exchange of information.

Lewis (1998) recommends that each partnership requires new definition and adaptation in accordance with different contextual needs through a general process that includes identifying the goals of the partnership, designing a range of mechanisms for achieving the necessary inter-organisational and inter-personal linkages, and reviewing purposes and progress regularly. Processes of organisational learning, inter-organisational communication, and techniques of adaptation of successful models will be of central importance. Once principles are agreed on, specific practices can be adapted to local conditions and active partnerships can then be developed. Lister (2000) explains that relationships appear to be strongest if there are multiple linkages that connect the organisations involved. For example, Lister (2000) argues that if all relationships are managed by organisation leaders, the partnership is vulnerable to changes in individuals and patterns of organisational leadership.

3.5 Design of the relationship

Several publications highlight the importance of the dynamics of the relationship’s design in establishing the precedent for its success or failure (Gideon 1998; Lewis 1998; Brinkerhoff 1999, 2002; Lister 2000; Welle 2001; Pettigrew 2003). Brinkerhoff argues that the initial definition of ‘partnership’ at the onset of the relationship is crucial; more and/or better outcomes are attained if there is synergy during the design phase of the relationship, rather than if partners acted independently. Brinkerhoff suggests that synergy ought to occur through mutually agreed-upon specification of objectives, mechanisms for combining efforts and managing cooperation and determination of appropriate roles and responsibilities. Pettigrew therefore emphasises the importance to researchers of understanding the design, rules and governance of the relationship.

Gideon (1998) argues that NGOs are rarely involved in the design of projects, but are merely invited to execute them. Lister (2000) explains that, if a partnership is desired between organisations, there should be a clear understanding between the potential partners of what this entails and its implications for practice. For example, Lister argues that this understanding should include an explicit discussion about the potential dangers of partnership becoming a form of co-option.

In her comparative study of partnerships between RuralAid, WaterAid, and local government, Welle (2001) found that, whereas the relationship between WaterAid and Rural Aid was based on social values of partnership as an end in itself, between Rural Aid and local government the ‘partnership’ was based on economic values as a means to efficiency. The Rural Aid and local government partnership was recognised as being a contract, therefore failing to include mechanisms fostering mutuality in its practical model as the ‘rules of the game’ were non-negotiable. Welle found that, if there is mutual respect for the resources each bring into the relationship, there can be a higher degree of interdependency and reciprocity.
3.6 Nature of the relationship between NSPs and government agencies

While the research flow diagram identifies the ‘nature of the relationship’ between NSPs and government agencies as the core of the research, it does not depict any categories under this heading – except in regard to explicit and implicit power relations. The key issues discussed in this section were identified through the review of the literature: dimensions of the relationship; roles of participants; formal and informal interactions; methods, modes and strategies of interaction; accountability; autonomy and room for manoeuvre.

Dimensions of the relationship

NSPs commonly carry out several activities - service delivery, advocacy and/or policy dialogue - through a range of relationships (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Sood 2000; Moyo 2001; Matlin 2001; Bouget and Prouteau 2003; Moran 2006; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Ramanath 2005; Nelson 2006). Several publications explore the multiple dimensions through which relationships occur between NSPs, different levels of government, and donor agencies (Sood 2000; Matlin 2001; Wamai 2004; Nelson 2006). For example, Sood found that the boundaries between NSPs and government can be understood in terms of:

- issue-orientation (ideology of the NGO),
- financial dimension (NGOs utilising financial and material resources that the state could have employed),
- organisational dimension (NGO management of human and technical resources),
- policy dimension (encompassing the issue of how deeply NGOs can participate in the formulation of development policy).

Wamai (2004) explains that the depth or scope of a collaborative relationship can be understood in terms of the diversity of the relationship, diversity of levels of interactions in both organisational structures, amount of resources devoted to their operations and the prevailing political will.

Matlin (2001) describes two domains (i.e. organisational and sectoral) in which interactions occur between the state, the market, NGOs and civil society. Within the organisational domain, Matlin (2001) points out that each entity has its own objectives although a mutuality of interests is crucial to the relationship. The sectoral domain occurs in an overlapping space in which the NGO lies somewhat within state, civil society and market domains. Matlin demonstrates this in the figure below. Depending on the particular function of the relationship, the NGO may position itself in a specific area of overlap, although moving to other areas as the relationship evolves.

Figure 3.6.1 - Sectoral domains of NGO-state partnerships

Matlin (2001: 14) argues that ‘where the crunch of reality enters is that NGOs are often simultaneously trying to carry out both advocacy and service delivery functions’. Often, in taking
on combined roles of advocacy and service provision, there can be serious conflicts of interest between the two and that the tendency may be against the longer-term interests of both the NGO and the community that it ‘represents’. Matlin depicts this reality in the figure below.

Figure 3.6.2 - Functional characteristics of NGO activities

Nelson (2006) created a framework to explore and examine interactions occurring within six dimensions of the relationships between donor agencies and NSPs: technical, resource, values, interpersonal, political and legal. He argues that the integration of NGOs into larger aid systems can be better understood by taking into account the dynamics occurring within each of these different dimensions. Nelson (2006:705) argues that by taking these different dimensions equally into account, a fuller account of NGOs’ relations with other organisations in the aid system can be provided:

- **Technical dimension** refers to the capacity to make something happen, expertise in a field and capacities and methodologies for work. This includes the skills and organisational assets the organisation employs;
- **Resource dimension** refers to financial and other resources, and the strategies employed to secure them;
- **Values and mission dimension** refers to the organisational features that define their purposes and strategies; their vision and identity;
- **Interpersonal relationships** “includes friendships and antipathies among individuals, the movement of individuals among organisations, relationships across the boundaries between state and non-state” (non-profit and for-profit organisations), and between sectors of activity (development, environment and human rights), and the exercise of charisma and leadership.
- **Political life** “may be submerged or prominent, but NGOs form structured or informal ties with other organisations through networks or alliances; they may embrace or avoid partisan political allegiances or affiliation with social movements”.
- **Legal dimension** “embraces the statutory, regulatory, contractual and other formal arrangements that shape the NGO”. NGOs may be regulated, belong to professional associations, enter into contractual obligations and make quasi-legal agreements.

Nelson argues that interactions within the six dimensions outlined above shape relationships between NGOs, government agencies and donors in two ways:

First, the relative importance of these dimensions in the organisation’s life, their salience at a given time for its decision-making, will influence the NGO’s choices. Second, the interaction with the aid system may change or reinforce the configuration of an NGO’s dimensions by strengthening, for example, the NGO’s reliance on a particular technical competence or on external funding, or on personal and professional relationships.
Moving on from classifying the broad dimensions of relationships, the following sections focuses on the tremendous range of roles and interactions, both formal and informal, occurring between NSPs and government agencies, their alliances and networks, strategies of interaction, and issues of accountability and autonomy.

**Roles of participants**

In order to understand the dynamics of the relationship, it is important first to understand the roles that NGOs, different levels of government, donor agencies and associated network organisations play (Lister 2000; Matlin 2001; Wamai 2004; Bouget and Prouteau 2005; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005). Roles are often perceived differently by each member, signifying past and ongoing tensions. For example, Lister (2000) explains that levels of equality in a relationship were interpreted differently by each participant: the INGO referred to it as a ‘partnership’ whereas the NNGO did not do so. The donor agency that was involved referred to its relationship with the INGO as a ‘partnership’ but the INGO saw it more formally.

Krishna (2003) argues that different roles will be played by local governments and community organisations in different types of partnership, but, if these are appropriately structured, the can provide a basis for institutional strengthening at the local level. Pereira (2005) explains that the role of NGOs in partnerships is usually linked to the provision of local services for which they tend to have a natural legitimacy given their ties to the community and cumulative knowledge about needs. Migdal (1998), however, contends that the motive is different; by inviting NGOs to take over responsibility for welfare provision, the government is able to bypass vested local interests, through the co-optation of local populations. Migdal explains that this is a response to pressures of global capitalism for government to move from the role of directly administering welfare while maintaining control of the allocation of funds to NGOs.

Pereira (2005) distinguishes between the roles of NGOs acting as partners versus challengers. NGOs acting as partners collaborate with the state, whereas challengers attempt to hold the state accountable. However, NGOs in either category can be understood as co-operating with the state. Challengers of the state may also help to influence policy and this, in turn, may help those NGOs that work as partners. Furthermore, a ‘rebel’ NGO is sometimes as useful as a co-operative one, pushing the government to be accountable and therefore being more successful in service delivery. Pereira refers to this contradictory ‘double nature’ of NGOs, arguing that NGOs typically cannot be reduced to one category (i.e. ‘challenger’ or ‘partner’) as both tend to occur simultaneously, though in different dimensions. Similarly, Wamai (2004) describes the role of NGOs in relation to government as partners or challengers depending on the attitude that dominates their approach to public structures. Both roles can be seen as being in cooperation with government.

Several sources discuss tensions in service delivery and advocacy roles in NSP-government relationships. Matlin (2001) argues that NGOs may occupy different points on a continuum between positive and negative relationships with the state, in both advocacy and service delivery roles. In an advocacy role, NGOs may have either a positive relationship, collaborating with the government in getting an important message to some section of society, or a negative relationship in being critical of some government deficiency and seeking to change government attitudes. In service delivery, an NGO might be contracted to deliver a service to a community or it may be in a more negative relationship, providing a service that the government is failing to deliver or fund adequately. Bouget and Prouteau (2005), like Matlin, also argue that there may be serious conflicts between the advocacy and service delivery functions of NGOs, creating distrust and conflict. They 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.
Ramanath (2005) found that each NGO she studied evolved from having predominant roles of advocacy (i.e. confrontational) to those of service delivery (i.e. collaborative). These findings are in contrast to predominant views such as Korten’s (1990) thesis, which argues that NGOs evolve through four phases, beginning with very focused work (i.e. relief work), expanding to service delivery work with the state, and then engaging in advocacy and policy activities. Ramanath (2005) also found that features of advocacy and policy dialogue continued within each of the NGOs after they began taking on service delivery work, although the tactics each NGO employed changed over time. She explains that the notion of ‘service delivery’ is itself multifarious, demanding a variety of tools (i.e. balancing of programmatic with institutional objectives; cajoling bureaucratic and political elites; inviting and retaining technical and governmental competency; creating and sustaining internal consensus for change; and mobilising sufficient financial resources). One of her primary findings is that NGOs become increasingly complex over time, as measured by the number of roles that they engage in.

The research by Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom (all 2006), explores the ‘indirect’ provider roles of government in contracting, regulating, facilitating and maintaining policy dialogue with non-state service providers of basic education, health-care, water and sanitation. They found that government capacity to perform the contracting, regulatory and facilitating roles was weak, due to problems of capacity, information availability for monitoring, and political and economic instability. Moran (2006) found relatively little existing literature that described or analysed dialogue between government and NSPs about the development of policy, regulatory or contractual arrangements.

**Formal and informal interactions**

Interactions between government and NSPs tend to be formalised in some way (i.e. contract or some written documentation), although there are always coinciding informal modes of contact through organisational alliances and networks and through key individuals within the organisations (Lister 2000; Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Wamai 2004; Ramanath 2005). Henderson (2002) defines five types of interaction between governments and NGOs in the African context: bypassing the state with informal linkages; co-ordination through a specialist office; functional coordination by the specialised government department; decentralised linkages; and multi-focused structures without formal organisational arrangements.

Farrington and Bebbington (1992) and Hulme and Edwards (1997) argue that deliberate attempts at NGO-government collaboration have tended to under-emphasise that a wide range of formal and informal interactions often already existed. Similarly, Brinkerhoff (2002) explains that, on the one hand, NSP-government partnerships incorporate formal features such as performance contracts with NGOs for service delivery and sharing of staff between public sector agencies and NGOs. On the other, they also often contain different levels of informal interaction that Pettigrew (2003) refers to as ‘back-staging’ or interactions that occur ‘behind the scenes’ of formal requirements. Pettigrew contends that the combination of formal and informal interactions can also be perceived as complex vertical and horizontal levels of participation maintained through a range of communication channels. Like Pettigrew, Welle (2001) distinguishes between ‘symbolic’ (i.e. formal, usually contractual) and ‘real’ (i.e. based on dialogue, trust and transparency) collaboration. The dichotomy between ‘symbolic’ and ‘real’ collaborative relationships is linked with levels of formality and informality in the relationship, and the degree to which each dominates the relationship. For example, if the relationship is based almost entirely on a contractual arrangement, collaboration is likely to be more ‘symbolic’ than ‘real’.

Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2002) argue that when governments initiate partnerships, interactions tend to be top-down (i.e. more formal) whilst, when non-profits initiate partnerships, interaction tends to be bottom-up (i.e. more informal). In bottom-up initiated partnerships, non-profit
organisations are mainly concerned with policy advocacy or constituent empowerment, which is rarely the case when the state is the initiator. Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff claim that interactions formally stipulated in partnership arrangements can change during the partnership, for example adding policy advocacy to service delivery.

**Modes and strategies of interaction**

Some publications have theoretically and empirically described the methods, modes and strategies of interaction that members of an NSP-government relationship adopt (Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Postma 1994; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Stone 1996; Fowler 1998; Lewis 1998; Lister 2000; Dorman 2001; Welle 2001; Wilson 2001; Brainard and Siplon 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Pettigrew 2003; Brown and Troutt 2004; Ramanath 2005; Thompson 2005). We turn first to this literature, much of it about how power is asserted through forms of communication, and then to previous work by the *Whose Public Action?* team on the interactions that occur around specific activities (policy dialogue, contracting, regulation and facilitation).

Stone (1996) explains that relationships between organisations tend to occur more strongly in one of two orbits: one that is hierarchically ordered under government contracting agencies with conformity of rules and regulations, and the other that is more loosely structured around interpersonal relationships. Pettigrew (2003) explains that types of participation vary and are related to rules of inclusion and exclusion, determined by the explicit and implicit exercise of power. Lewis (1998) argues that the roots of problems in relationships are in power imbalances, imperfect communication and information flows, differences in organisational cultures and approaches and unequal access to resources.

Several sources discuss the role and effects of communication in NSP-government relationships (Postma 1994; Lewis 1998; Dorman 2001; Welle 2001; Brainard and Siplin 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Brown and Troutt 2004). Lewis (1998) found that problems within the partnership were based primarily on conflicts between centralised project cultures and local realities, particularly through discrepancies of language and local dialect. On the other hand, Lewis also found that partnership could create feedback loops and channels of communication that did not exist previously. He argues that the process of generating active partnerships is likely to require several key attributes that require the space and time for communication channels to be built between actors, allowing for risk sharing, the negotiation of conflict and difference, the formation of personal ties between individuals from different partner groups, and an open exchange of problems and ideas to facilitate learning.

In a comparative research study of two different relationships occurring within Rural Aid: Water Aid (an INGO) and a government agency, Welle (2001) found that two elements were crucial in determining interactions: power relations and channels of communication. Welle identified power relations as being closely linked to the way in which resources (in this case, water) are valued and access is controlled. Communication is related to reciprocity and the exchange of information through dialogue. Dialogue was found to be a vital component of the quality of the relationship, allowing flexibility and mutual understanding, and helping to create trust and transparency. An additional factor influencing both power relations and channels of communication was the length of the relationship. For example, the Water Aid-Rural Aid relationship changed over time from a ‘master-servant’ dynamic to one in which Rural Aid had much more room for manoeuvre due to institutional changes in Water Aid that provided the opportunity for more open dialogue, transparency and accountability.

Brown and Troutt (2004) argue that research on non-profit/government relationships should focus on how to improve communication and understanding, contributing to theories of partnership effectiveness. As Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2002) argue, technological development (i.e. communication through the Internet) has had an influence on organisational structures and
process which has in turn influenced the ways in which non-profits engage with each other. Yet, Brainard and Siplon (2002) claim that theory-building on NGO-government relations has not accounted for changes in communication technology and subsequent effects on relationships with other organisations, actors, alliances and networks.

‘Backstaging’ or informal day-to-day communication (Pettigrew 2003) is also an important aspect of interaction. Postma (1994: 454) explains that, although there is agreement in the NGO and aid communities of Mali and Niger for example that ‘listening is at the cornerstone of effective partnership’, there is much less appreciation of how everyday ‘talking’ is basic to actual practice. Dorman’s (2001) research on NGO-government relationships in Zimbabwe found that most NGOs emphasised day-to-day interaction (i.e. regular and informal) with ministries of the Mugabe government.

The use of varied strategies and tactics by NSPs and government engaged in relationships are examined and discussed in several sources (Hulme and Edwards 1997; Najam 2000; Dorman 2001; Ramanath 2005). Dorman’s research finds that NGOs tend to avoid being ‘political’ to keep the relationship with the government non-adversarial. She explains that NGOs use different non-confrontational tactics to undertake advocacy: passive resistance (empowerment through alternative strategies), collaboration (working closely with ministries but with little interest in changing policy), entryism (attempting to penetrate the state machinery to influence policy directions from within) and opposition (protests, high-profile appeals, demonstrations).

Ramanath (2005) demonstrates that NGO relations with the government are not simply either confrontational or cooperative, but are defined by combinations of various interactions. In efforts to gain and retain legitimacy, NGOs are likely to use multiple interaction styles both simultaneously and sequentially. Using an historical approach by focusing on selected ‘key events’ within the evolution of the NGO’s interactions with government, she was able to provide an explanation of interactions that built on simpler classifications of NSP-government relationship, and specifically expanding on Najam’s (2000) typology of the overarching strategic aims of partners. Ramanathan’s primary thesis is that NGO-government relationships are made up of complex and interdependent struggles that evolve over time. She focused on how the strategy was operationalised, the tactical activities that were planned and carried out through a ‘tactical repertoire’. The idea of tactical repertoires used a typology (Oliver 1991) of strategic responses that organisations tend to use in response to institutional pressures towards conformity.

Table 3.6.1 - Strategic Responses to Institutional Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquiesce</td>
<td>Habit, Imitate, Comply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>Balance, Pacify, Bargain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Conceal, Buffer, Escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defy</td>
<td>Dismiss, Challenge, Attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulate</td>
<td>Co-opt, Influence, Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Oliver 1991: 152)
Linked to several of the arguments presented earlier in this review (i.e. the process and complexities of partnerships/relationships), Ramanath found that there were constant shifts in strategies and tactics when one or more were seen not to work, but each NGO used different tactics in response to the same macro-level environment. She argues that ‘in efforts to gain and retain legitimacy and relevance, NGOs are found to shift strategies in succession’ (Ramanath 2005: 9).

Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom (all 2006) collaborated in a research project exploring the types of engagement between NSPs and government across six countries in four service delivery sectors: education, health, sanitation and water. One of its themes was policy dialogue. Moran’s (2006) literature review reveals that whilst policy dialogue can be harmonious or adversarial, it is also often non-existent. Sansom found little evidence of locally based dialogue about water and sanitation between government agencies and civil society institutions in the six countries studied. Where there was dialogue, it was often initiated by NGOs and/or as part of donor programmes. Sansom (2006: 212) argues that ‘if local dialogue is to be really effective, it should lead to more comprehensive forms of engagement with NSPs such as co-production or contracting’. He explains that, in the case of contractual arrangements between government agencies, private sector and NGOs to provide new water and sanitation services, the NGO partner may often be concerned about its lack of power or voice; ongoing dialogue and communication amongst partners can help to reduce this problem.

Rose (2006) found that the case studies highlighted the inter-dependence of different forms of collaboration between NSPs and government in the education sector, and shows how this may create tensions between NSPs and government. High level of engagement in terms of facilitation in South Africa and Bangladesh, for example, often requires a high level of engagement with government with respect to meeting regulatory requirements. On the one hand, this may encourage dialogue where requirements are considered inappropriate or inaccessible. On the other hand, this dialogue often becomes antagonistic, either putting providers at risk of losing government incentives, or resulting in NSPs withdrawing from dialogue. Rose argues that moving towards ‘real’, on-going dialogue is required to ensure that collaboration between NSPs and the government benefits the poor. Palmer (2006: 234) identified two common themes that emerged across the case study countries in terms of policy dialogue in the health sectors: first the trend to try and establish greater contact and collaboration and, second, the logistical difficulties of doing this. The cases demonstrated the resource intensity of maintaining contact, cooperation and dialogue. Batley (2006) concludes that while formal opportunities for dialogue have increased, often under donor influence, they are often in practice limited in three senses. First, they take place at the policy design stage in set-piece events rather than in continuous interaction over policy implementation. Second, they often involve NSPs very cursorily. Thirdly, they typically include primarily the larger NGOs which have capacity to represent themselves in such events.

The Whose Public Action? team examined different modes of regulation in NSP-government relationships. Palmer (2006: 234) explains that ‘alternative approaches to regulation are often characterised as the stick (a legalistic, command and control approach) or the carrot (where incentives are used to provide stimulus to conform)’. Government regulation of NSPs operates differently in different service sectors, with one similarity: it is rarely practised constructively and is often used as an instrument of oppressive control, especially where there is a government service to protect. In health and education, regulation largely applies at the point of ‘entry’, in other words it is about the conditions under which providers register to practice. In the case of water and sanitation, independent provision is rarely formally recognised; if there is any regulation it is about standards of practice rather than eligibility to practise (Batley 2006:2545). Rose (2006) explains that arrangements for formal regulation of NGOs in the education sector differ from that applied to private providers. NGOs tend not to be assessed on the basis of education-related criteria, but to
be regulated through elaborate rules for registration that maintain government’s control, particularly where donors are funding NGOs directly.

The Whose Public Action? team categorised forms of contractual interaction into three types (Batley 2006: 248):

- Tight, hierarchical contracts between governments and NSPs which, in practice, were often poorly specified and monitored due to problems of government capacity, lack of trust between the partners, and unclear legal status of the contractor.
- Loose but hierarchical agreements where, in principle, government was contracting an NSP but the ‘rules of engagement’ were unclear or not respected – leading to tensions in water concessions (Sansom 2006) and the contracting out of school management (Rose 2006).
- Loose collaborative agreements which may break down where there is lack of trust about the fulfilment of mutual obligations, but may be sustained where the partners have a mutual interest in maintaining their commitment in return for the commitment of the other. The health sector presented examples of formally agreed joint ventures between government and independently funded NGOs in Pakistan (Palmer 2006), and forms of informal co-production between government, NGOs and community organizations in water and sanitation in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Malawi (Sansom 2006)

**Accountability**

Accountability is an issue that permeates all stages of NSP-government relationships: accountability of the NSP, the government agency, the donor, other affiliated individuals and partners, and accountability to the poor. Tappin (2000) argues that there are two types of accountability in NGO-government relationships: short-term functional accountability and strategic accountability. Krishna (2003) explains that there are three different directions of accountability: upwards or vertical (to higher levels of administration or funders), downwards (to users or citizens) and horizontal (to network organisations or partners). In practice, upward accountability tends to be emphasised over the other two types due to the powerful role of donors, and to the vertical accountability that exists in all government systems. Rose (2006) shows how private providers of education in South Africa are subject to multiple layers of (upward) accountability that are not only to do with education performance but also to tax and labour law authorities; while NGOs in Pakistan and Bangladesh are more accountable to funding donors than to line ministries.

White (1999) argues that the current push for NGO-government partnerships is unlikely to increase pressures for downward accountability. On these lines, Haque (2004) contends that ‘partnerships’ tend to empower NGOs rather than the poor, expanding the power of donors and NGOs whilst weakening the power of the poor and often sidelining local government. Seckinelgin (2006) argues that although institutional relations are often discussed in relation to NGO accountability, most of these discussions emphasise ways to achieve efficient and effective coordination of these relationships, rather than how accountability to the poor can be achieved. However, there are cases where attempts have been made to involve communities or clients in the process of monitoring and regulation of service providers. Rose (2006) describes programmes in Bangladesh (BRAC) and Malawi (SCF) to involve local communities in school management so as to increase local accountability – though it presents dangers of local élite capture.

White (1999) claims that government agencies are accountable to their constituents and NGOs to donors, warning that ‘franchising the state’ to NGOs may erode mechanisms of accountability rather than strengthen them. NGO expansion, even under franchise, may lead to a bypassing of the state and the further erosion of state services. Mayhew (2005) explains that lines of accountability are often not defined and that government has little capacity to regulate NGOs accountability. Therefore, Mayhew (like Rose 2006) claims, in practice NGOs are often primarily accountable to donors which impose stringent functional accountability measures but which are themselves accountable neither to recipient governments nor to beneficiary communities. Pereira
(2005) argues that aligning NGO efforts to government objectives lessens the capacity for NGOs to hold the government accountable. On the other hand, Sood (2000) contends that, although governments try to pass on responsibility to NGOs, NGOs can act to make the state more accountable through either conflictual or cooperative means, depending on the level of synergy between them.

Lister (2001) outlines the key findings of a research study of relationships between an INGO, NNGO and a donor agency. The findings were categorised into tensions, accountability and dependence arising from resource flows between the partners. In terms of accountability between the INGO and NNGO, Lister (2001) observes that the INGO had no accountability to the NNGO although there was some NNGO accountability to the INGO based on financial accounting. The INGO was accountable to the donor agency although there was no donor accountability to the INGO and few opportunities for the INGO to influence policy. Accountability operated upwards rather than downwards.

**Autonomy, identity and room for manoeuvre**

The maintenance of organisational identity and autonomy, particularly on the part of the NSP in a relationship with government, is a central issue that is discussed from a variety of perspectives (Postma 1994; Fowler 1997; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Sanyal 1997; Streeten 1997; Coston 1998; Gideon 1998; Najam 2000; Sood 2000; Tappin 2000; Dorman 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Campos et al. 2004; Lewis 2004; Mayhew 2005; Pereira 2005; Ullah et al. 2006). For example, Hulme and Edwards (1997) and Streeten (1997) ask whether NGOs and the government have become so close that NGOs have lost their autonomy and can no longer resist becoming mere agents of government.

Hilhorst (2003) uses the notion of ‘room for manoeuvre’ to analyse the social space actors have to pursue their ideas and projects. Hilhorst argues that NGOs are usually restricted by circumstances and institutional limitations. The way actors expand their ‘room for manoeuvre’ depends on their effectiveness in enrolling others in their project; the space for manoeuvring largely depends upon the network of actors who become partially, though rarely completely, enrolled in the project. Coston (1998) acknowledges that the effects of contracting on NGOs are not well-understood, particularly in terms of any mutual dependency and/or loss of identity by the NGOs. With the blurring of the government and non-government sectors, there is the question: How non-governmental is the organisation in actuality? Coston also asks how contracting with the government affects other programmes and projects the NGO is involved in.

Brinkerhoff (2002) argues that when the identity of the NGO is not maintained in a relationship with government, the relationship will not add value or produce efficient and effective results. However, Campos et al. (2004) argue that NGOs can compensate for this by engendering a sense of ownership amongst the villagers; the deepening of social capital is the overriding factor in ‘good’ NGOs that helps them to offset for bad policies that compromise their autonomy. Wamai (2004) argues that the main issue is about how much space the NGO can carve out for itself and how much autonomy the political system will allow them. Tappin (2000), for example, argues that for NGOs in Tuvalu, retaining autonomy from the government is a challenge because it is such a small country. Dorman (2001) found through her research on NGO-government relations in Zimbabwe, that situation-specific factors maintained political space for Undungu’s (i.e. an NGO) work. As long as Undugu’s activities did not threaten the power status quo it was politically beneficial and encouraged. Gideon (1998) claims that smaller NGOs, or those with more radical agendas (e.g. gender equality, land redistribution and class equality) posing a threat to state sovereignty face increased marginalisation.

Some literature discusses autonomy as it relates to financial in/dependence and political space (Gideon 1998; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Lewis 2004; Pereira 2005). For example, Pereira claims
that the margins of autonomy for NGOs shrink as they become more financially dependent on government. Gideon argues that when existing NGOs are persuaded to scale up their activities in order to compete for funding, they often abandon their original ideologies in the attempt to meet targets and performance indicators, thus compromising their autonomy. Sood (2000) found that in terms of autonomy, both government and NGOs are working to enhance the space for NGOs’ policy influence in specific areas, through financial means and technical resources. The question is whether, with large amounts of government financing, NGOs will become ‘instruments of government policy’. NGOs tend to be critical of relationships with government, as there is mistrust and fear that they will be coerced into conforming to bureaucratic guidelines. However, Sood used interdependence theory to demonstrate that the co-optation of NGOs within the drinking water sector has not occurred; many NGOs have maintained their autonomy whilst working with the government due to their strength in numbers (i.e. through the network of Pravah) and influence at the local level.

Autonomy is, at least partly, a subjective matter. Ullah et al. (2006) found, through their study of NGO-government relationships in the health sector, that NGOs may follow government guidelines but decide their own operational strategies in accordance with their philosophy and values, allowing them to retain their own sense of independence. Lister (2001), in her study of relationships between an INGO, NNGO and a donor agency in the US, found that there were different levels of dependency and space autonomy felt by each organisational actor. For example, between the INGO and NNGO, the INGO considered the NNGO to be dependent on them, although the NNGO actually felt a limited amount of dependence. Both the INGO and the donor agency agreed that the NNGO was dependent on them, although the NNGO perceived independence in its work on the ground.

Fowler (1997) discusses the struggles of non-government development organisations (NGDOs), characterising them as having ‘third sector’ and voluntary characteristics, but also as actors in a complex development process in which they try to maintain their identity. Fowler sets up a framework for comparing how the principles of voluntary and governmental organisations produce different responses to the same basic operational needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational practices</th>
<th>Voluntary principles</th>
<th>Government principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required behaviour of people in the organisation</td>
<td>Reliance on personal values, commitment and self-motivation</td>
<td>Reliance on hierarchy, command and enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the relationship between the organisation and the outside world, particularly to those the organisation serves</td>
<td>Dynamism and power of self-willed human action, solidarity between the organisation and those it is serving, diversity of types of relationships</td>
<td>Inclined to be authoritative with citizens and to legislate and enforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way resources are mobilised</td>
<td>Raising subscriptions so as to cover the costs of services not provided at full cost to beneficiaries</td>
<td>Taxes paid by citizens who should receive adequate public services in exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on and assessment of performance</td>
<td>Legitimacy, primary stakeholders (beneficiaries) and donors, although difference between organisations that are primarily service providers (there to serve) or those that benefit mutually (there for the benefit of its own members)</td>
<td>Political, citizen satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the diagram below, Fowler (1997: 29) argues that service-providing NGDOs are most often found in areas 2, 3 and 4, rather than being placed completely in the ‘voluntary principles’
category. Fowler explains this as a result of the ‘aid system’ demanding a high degree of professionalism from NGDOs, ‘displacing moral motivations with more functional concerns of effective delivery’. In the government/business overlap area (i.e. 2), Fowler argues that the notion of ‘solidarity’ with the poor tends to dissipate. Thus, the NGDO loses some level of accountability to the poor as the concern with solidarity shifts to effectiveness.

In the area of business/voluntary overlap (i.e. 3), Fowler describes the tendency for the NGDO to shift from poverty alleviation as a moral response to a social problem, to a simultaneous concern with organisational growth and an ability to spend money. In the end, often ‘economies of scale come at the cost of choice and flexibility’ (Fowler 1997: 30). Area 4 provides the greatest complexity for NGDOs to juggle and balance different priorities of poverty alleviation and social justice whilst functioning as a business to provide basic services. This confuses the voluntary sector and it is often here that ‘lip service is paid to voluntarism and solidarity’ (Fowler 1997: 31).

Figure 3.6.3 - Overlapping principles affecting NGDOs

Fowler (1997) uses the term ‘identity’ to describe the NGDO’s ideological position and its struggle to maintain this position somewhere within the boundaries of the voluntary principles arena, without being completely lost to either government or business principles. The NGDO’s values, beliefs and development philosophy are core to its identity. In locating beliefs, Fowler contends that NGDOs seldom talk about their beliefs explicitly; rather these emerge through statements about their perception and analysis of development generally, or through the ways that their vision or purpose are translated into action.

Fowler (1997) argues that, although the NGDOs may articulate one set of beliefs, they often carry out practices that are quite different. These inconsistencies are often accepted for reasons of survival in the aid system. Conversely, Sanyal (1997) recommends that NGOs work closely with market and government institutions to get access to resources controlled by dominant institutions without unduly sacrificing their autonomy.

Fowler argues that the lack of shared beliefs within an NGDO results in a lack of trust, hierarchical management and a control orientation which reduce the ability of the NGDO to respond rapidly and in a participatory manner to its primary stakeholders (i.e. the poor). Fowler identifies several other sources that influence the organisation’s identity: political affiliations, motivations of social groupings, promotion of national values, specific issues (e.g. the environment), technological advancement, particular ideologies, personal inspiration, support for other organisations, and historical and social dimensions. The struggle over the organisation’s identity is handled through
its internal governance or management structure. The NGDO is more likely to be able to hold onto its founding principles and voluntary values if the system of governance internally allows it. Fowler identifies three common governance structures:

- Self-regulated (strong and coherent identity unless loss of leadership occurs);
- Self-selected oligarchy (the more common structure with a governing board that allocates staff and volunteers);
- Constituent-based (less common, with identifiable political and economic groups as part of the constituency though they do not govern the organisation).

3.7 Effects of the relationship

Several empirical studies discuss the effects of relationships on the NSP, government agency, donor agency, community beneficiary or associated network members. These effects are portrayed as negative, positive or neutral (Postma 1994; Gideon 1998; Lewis 1998; Sood 2000; Lister 2001; Welle 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Feiock and Jang 2003; Wamai 2004; Pereira 2005; Ramanath 2005). The effects of NSP-government relationships have to do with issues of organisation, legitimacy, trust, autonomy, contextual differences and sustainability as referred to in other sections of this literature review. In other words, the relationship may change in its turn changing organisations’ agendas, challenging their goals and identities, and perhaps even the underlying institutional environment.

Ramanath (2005) claims that NGO-government relationships are made up of complex and interdependent struggles that evolve over time. Similarly, Lewis (1998) explains that dependent partnership can become active over time or vice versa. Campos et al. (2004) also argue that the character of the relationship whether one of substitution or complementarity does not remain constant over time; the relationship is not static and may become more or less dynamic.

Welle’s (2001) study in Ghana finds that the principle of efficient delivery tends not to be socially sustainable if it is imposed as a top-down initiative. Postma (1994) finds that NGOs are too concerned about ‘doing’ and fulfilling immediate donor requirements to be truly sustainable in the long run. Gideon (1998) argues that it remains questionable whether the use of NGOs as agents of service delivery has either led to bureaucratic reform or enabled governments to weaken the influence of powerful local networks. Sood (2000) argues that, in India, NGOs have predominantly been co-opted by the government. Tappin (2000) finds that the government of Tuvalu had not formalised routes through which NGOs could participate in development processes. This lack of direction presented limitations for NGOs, leading to a lack of systematic and close collaboration in planning, programming and implementation on both sides. A lack of understanding of each other’s priorities led to duplication and inefficient use of resources as well as sustainability questions that were linked with a lack of human resource capacity and cultural impact. However, the increase in financial resource and expert power resulted in greater recognition of the value of NGOs by the government in spite of power imbalances.

Wamai (2004) describes three different consequences of NGO-government relationships in the health sectors in Kenya and Finland: changing health care systems (i.e. trends in both countries have followed global shifts in ideas about good health – particularly Health for All); changing nature and scope of the NGO health system; and emerging scope and types of collaboration (as a response to the shift in participation at every level). Also in the health sector, Brinkerhoff (2002) observed differences in the behaviour of medical staff in response to new incentives resulting from an NGO-government partnership.

Pereira (2005) argues that the indirect effects of decentralisation are the segmentation of the NGO universe according to varying levels of formality, structure and professional expertise. For
example, larger NGOs are characterised by greater access to national and international funding, often leading to greater levels of participation in the process of policy formulation. Smaller NGOs often lack professional structure and are usually organised around voluntary participation of people in the area, therefore making them more dependent on funding from local government and larger NGOs.

Stone (1996) found that fiscal matters came to increasingly dominate the NGO board’s agenda as contracting requirements took up more and more of the board’s time. Stone explains that originally the NGO’s board was really involved in local, state and national networks, but dropped them as contracts and funding grew in importance. The NGO’s board also dropped its direct involvement in programme issues except to hear staff reports. Ultimately the organisation split into two as it could not survive the rapid expansion and internal value conflicts that arose as a result.

Isomorphism

The issue of isomorphism emerged repeatedly in theoretical and empirical literature discussing relationships of NSPs and government agencies (Saidel 1991; Farrington and Bebbington 1992; Stone 1996; Fowler 1997; Wood 1997; Sood 2000; Dorman 2001; Brinkerhoff 2002; Ramanath 2005). As applied to organisational relationships, isomorphism is the result of different entities interacting with each other and becoming more alike in identity, form and structure. Considering NSP-government relationships and the general assumption that NSPs are typically the weaker actor in the relationship, isomorphism theory assumes that the NSP takes on more and more of the characteristics of government. This was discussed in the earlier section on autonomy, through Fowler’s (1997) mapping of the intersection of NGDOs, government and the market and how NGDOs become more hierarchical and bureaucratic.

Ramanath (2005) explains that isomorphism is expected to take place in an organisational field because the system of organisations is defined both by relational linkages and by shared cultural rules and meaning systems. Resultant rationalised myths of organisational structure create an assumption of isomorphic change in terms of structural features, internal decision-making processes and behavioural features. Ramanath cites several sources (i.e. DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Meyer and Rowan 1992; Bidwell 2001) to show that there is ample evidence in research using organisational theory to support the claim of isomorphism. Farrington and Bebbington (1992), Wood (1997) and Brinkerhoff (2002) claim that as non-profit providers enter into relationships with government, they increasingly organise themselves to mirror and imitate the organisational characteristics of their public sector counterparts. Stone (1996) cites Wolch (1990) and Smith and Lipsky (1993), claiming that isomorphism has occurred as non-profit organisations experience rapid goal succession to make their programmes and planning processes reflect government priorities. Farrington (1993), Fowler (1997) and Sood (2000) claim that NGO-government relationships will usually compel NGOs to bring their organisational structures, missions and thought patterns into conformity with more top-down, bureaucratic activities, because of their financial dependence on the government. Ramanath (2005) explains that, as more NGOs shift from confrontational to cooperative positions with government, institutional theorists inform us that it would be reasonable to expect that organisations will become more homogenous or more similar in their structure, culture and output.

This perception of ‘isomorphism’ is challenged by Ramanath. She argues that NGOs are so diverse in their tactical activities within NSP-government relations that they do not all fall under the isomorphic spell of government. She observes on her study of three NGO-government relationships in the housing sector of Mumbai that the three similar and proximate NGOs each used different strategies in response to the same environment to maintain their own autonomy. She analysed the means (strategies and tactics) and the structures adopted by NGOs to carry out housing activities. Although each NGO started to display a certain degree of uniformity in their tactics of engagement with the government (e.g. all NGOs actively sought and accepted
appointments as delivery agents of the State), organisational interventions suggested a less uniform pattern of organisational adaptation. Ramanath argues that two primary factors condition variations in organisational response to isomorphic demands, path-dependency and variability in resource environments. Path dependency is related to the organisational commitment to founding values and entrenchment in tried and tested practices that are complicated by internal political struggles and the extent of leadership commitment to realising goals. She explains that the embeddedness of founding principles, core values and beliefs, past experiences of leaders and housing philosophies have either delayed or forestalled NGOs’ tendency to make a complete shift towards adopting service delivery roles for the government.

SECTION 4: Typological classifications of NSP-government relationships

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 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.

It should be kept in mind that each typological model places 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 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. Those that might be most worth considering for the research at hand are Lewis (1997), Coston (1998), Najam (2000) and Welle (2001), and particularly Ramanath’s (2005) application of Najam’s model.

The typologies have been categorised into three areas: discourse, continuum and multi-dimensional models. In the ‘Whose Public Action’ research proposal and discussions, we have 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. There are no typologies identified and outlined below that fit directly with these dimensions. However, through some slight modifications (i.e. primarily through a change of wording), several could be located on either one of the spectrums:

- Horizontal/vertical: Pereira (2005)
- Formal/informal: Maxwell and Riddell (1998); Farrington and Lewis (1993); Lewis (1997)
- Both spectrums with little changes to each: Batley (2006);

The Whose Public Action mapping diagram is presented below as a starting point.
The table below takes the categories of *discourse*, *continuum* and *multi-dimensional* models into account, outlining the key dimensions and areas of interaction between the NSP and government that are described by each author. The following sub-sections then examine the literature on each category in turn.

**Table 3.7.1 – Categories of key typologies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Key dimensions</th>
<th>Types of government-NSP interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Welle (2001) – critical and discourse theories</td>
<td>Links between discourses of partnership and discourses of development approaches or ‘public action’</td>
<td>Efficiency discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Skelcher et al. (2005) – democratic and discourse theory</td>
<td>Club, Agency, Polity</td>
<td>Managerial discourse, Consociationalism, Participatory discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Selsky and Parker (2005)</td>
<td>Social issues, Causes</td>
<td>Transactional, Developmental, Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Pereira (2005)</td>
<td>Political meaning and effectiveness</td>
<td>Spectrum from ‘weak’ to ‘strong’, Challengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Maxwell and Riddell (1998)</td>
<td>Policy dialogue, Information sharing</td>
<td>Active partnerships, Dependent partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Lewis (1997)</td>
<td>Length of time, Roles, Risk, Differences, Purpose, Communication</td>
<td>Competition, Co-operation, Coordination, Collaboration, Control, Formal collaboration, Formal or informal links, Formal or informal interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Ullah et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Autonomy, structure, communication</td>
<td>Dual, NGO-dominated, Government-dominated, Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td>Farrington and Lewis (1993)</td>
<td>Level of formality in links and interaction</td>
<td>Principal/agent relations, Inter-organisational negotiation, System coordination, Loose understandings, Hierarchical contract, Co-production, Autonomous or dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td>Wamai (2004)</td>
<td>Level of government/NGO domination in funding and/or service delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td>Davies (2002)</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td>Batley (2006)</td>
<td>Levels of formality, power symmetry and dependency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Discourse models

Skelcher et al. (2005) and Welle (2001) use a discourse approach to classifying partnerships. 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 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). 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.

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. 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.

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

4.2 Continuum models

This category includes NSP-government typologies that are dichotomised on a single continuum. 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.

Pereira (2005) distinguishes between NSPs as either partners or challengers of government. While acknowledging that this categorisation is ‘somewhat fictitious’, the paper 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of partnership</th>
<th>Elements of partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Jointly agreed country programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-annual financial agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Maxwell and Riddell 1998: 260)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 3.7.3 - Active and dependent partnerships

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

(Lewis 1997)

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. (2006: 144) article depicting the competition-control continuum (derived from Green and Matthias 1997).

Figure 3.7.2 - The competition-control continuum

4.3 Multi-dimensional models

Ten typologies have been categorised as using multiple dimensions (Farrington and Lewis 1993; Wamai 2004; Davies 2002; Batley 2006; Ullah et al. 2006; Young; Brinkerhoff 2002; Coston 1998; Najam 2000; Ramanath 2005). The sequencing of these typologies aims to mirror the increasing complexity that is explicated through these multi-dimensional models.

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 whether the partnership is formally mandated or not. Formal and informal interaction is depicted on a continuum between conflict and support.

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 (2004) accepts that this model is overly simplified, he argues that it is useful for initial stages of analysis.

Figure 3.7.3 - Four models of state-NGO relations in service production

Davies (2002) describes partnership as a mode of governance, distinguishing between three different types. 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

Davies 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).

Research by Batley (2006), Moran (2006), Palmer (2006), Rose (2006) 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. The typology Batley (2006) 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 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.

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 (2002) 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 (2002) 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 the 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 3.7.4 - Mutuality and identity aspects of partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational identity</th>
<th>Mutuality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-optation &amp; gradual absorption</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Brinkerhoff 2002)

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.
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.

1) **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.

2) **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.

3) **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.

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*.

4) **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.

5) **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.

6) **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.

7) **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.
8) **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 partnerships, mutualist strategies and co-production. Coston acknowledges that, in this sense, many believe that authentic collaboration between government and NGOs is impossible.

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).

Figure 3.7.6 - The four C’s of NGO-government relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals (Ends)</th>
<th>Strategies (Means)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similar</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dissimilar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>Complementarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Najam 2000)

Najam (2000) 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 (2005), 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 (2000) and Ramanath (2005). 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.

The four types of relationships are explained in further detail below:

- **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.

Ramanath (2005) 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. Her study is explained further in other sections of this review.

**SECTION 5: Conclusion and implications for the NGPA research on ‘Whose Public Action?’**

5.1 **The WPA research approach**

The *Whose Public Action?* (WPA) research on NSP-government relationships in education, health and sanitation sector programmes in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh complements and contributes to empirical research studies described in this literature review. The WPA research uses a range of complementary 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 (i.e. non-formal education); sanitation (i.e. community-led sanitation), and health (i.e. primary health care). One case is selected per sector programme in each country.

The WPA research follows on the six country case study of NSP-government engagement in each
service delivery sector undertaken by Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom (all 2006). Moran (2006: 204) argued in her literature review on recent research into government interventions in the non-state provision (NSP) of education, health, water and sanitation that the vast majority of studies of NSP describe the scale and features of non-state providers and the characteristics of their clienteles rather than the nature of the relationship between NSPs and the state; and even where they are concerned with state/non-state relations, they do not compare alternative modes of engagement. The literature review undertaken extends Moran’s findings. There are very few examples of comparisons of alternative modes of engagement and no examples of comparison across different service delivery sectors within the relevant literature. However, this review has identified and drawn on a quite considerable number of empirical studies comparing NSP-government relationships in different country contexts.

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 is examining the evolution of the relationship as well as the factors that have formed (and conditioned the agendas) of non-state 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 WRA 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 does not seek to simplify NSP-government relationships into a particular typology; indeed the research is not so much interested in classification as in describing the dynamics of relations about ‘public action’. The WPA research recognises that relationships are multi-dimensional and that they change and evolve. If a typology is used, it is as a reference or entry point to understanding relations.

5.2 Useful typologies

Of the typologies presented in the literature review, four are particularly useful for the WPA research: Coston (1998), Lewis (1998), Najam (2000) and Brinkerhoff (2002). Lewis’s (1998) active and dependent partnership typology is useful for a simple classification to depict the level of interactions at different stages of the relationship. Coston’s (1998) typology portrays levels of rejection or acceptance of institutional pluralism that might also be useful to signify the government’s level of acceptance at different historical moments. Brinkerhoff’s (2002) multi-dimensional model of mutuality and organisational identity might be helpful to indicate levels of autonomy and ‘room for manoeuvre’. Ramanath’s (2005) study nicely employs Najam’s (2000) typology as a starting point for undertaking deeper analysis.

There are several areas in the literature on NSP-government relationships that lack empirical evidence. To begin with, there are few studies that have really engaged with and tried to make sense of the complexities of relationships. Related to this, the literature does not sufficiently engage with the factors that condition relationships at different levels, linking the macro with the meso and micro. Nor does it adequately take on the influences of the policy environment, for example, through policies, standards, targets and methods of measurement.

5.3 Comparable studies

Of all the empirical studies identified in the literature review, there are only a few that fully take into account the context, complexities and evolution of relationships between NSP-government relationships. Ramanath’s (2005) is by far the most pertinent empirical study as it describes in
detail the evolution of three different NGOs and the ways in which they strategically positioned themselves to both challenge and co-operate with government. Hilhorst’s (2003) ethnography of NGOs in the Cordillera region of the Philippines is also relevant although its main unit of analysis is the NGO, not any particular relationship per se. However, that said, it analyses multiple relationships associated with different NGOs and with government agencies. Lewis’s (1998) multi-organisational study provides insight into the dynamics of different stakeholders involved in a development partnership project in Bangladesh, taking into account the context and ideological interests associated with the project, including those of the government and NGOs. Pettigrew’s (2003) action research study of a multi-organisational partnership is an innovative study that attempts to portray the formal ‘front-staging’ of the partnership and the informal day-to-day ‘back-staging’.

Ethnographic approaches were found to be valuable across several empirical studies on NSP-government relationships. The WPA research was unable fully to apply an ethnographic perspective due to a lack of time and financial resources. However, our research methods include participant observations in relevant meetings and events and fieldnotes to better inform interview and document data.

5.4 Relevant theories

Several theories outlined in section 1 are valuable to the WPA research. Principal-agency and social capital theories were central to the initial research proposal, although principal agency theory, as it stands, is not sufficient to explore NSP-government relationships. Theories of social capital would be a valuable contribution to the WPA research, together with analysis of the interests represented in associated networks, alliances and coalitions. Other theories that might add insight to better understand different aspects of NSP-government relationships are New Institutional Economics theory, Inter-Organisational Relations (IOR), theories of power, discourse and resource dependency. Theories of political economy, although not identified in empirical studies, provide possible value.

The theories outlined and discussed in Wamai’s (2004) study provide insights into the ways in which different theories can highlight different aspects of NSP-government relationships (particularly inter-organisational theory) although Wamai does not rigorously apply these theories. Lister’s (2000) study examining power dynamics within a partnership between an INGO, NNGO and bi-lateral donor organisation is a useful overview of how power can be operationalised using Dahl’s (1957) framework. Although Lister acknowledges that Dahl’s framework of power is inadequate for an understanding of partnerships and their underlying power relations, it is a valuable way of systematising the concept of power to explore dynamics of a relationship. Welle’s (2001) empirical study comparing two relationships a particular NNGO is engaged in (i.e. with an INGO and with a local government agency) in Ghana is a useful example of the value of using a discourse approach to understanding the links between language and power, through a critical approach to understanding how the partners understood and defined ‘partnership’ and what was actually carried out in practice. Furthermore, Welle’s study suggests a link between discourses of ‘partnership’ and discourses of ‘public action’ or social development which is the central theme in the WPA research.

5.5 Relevance to WPA analytic steps

The key issues identified in this review support, challenge and guide the usefulness of the research flow diagram. The only area of the research flow diagram not covered in the literature is ‘service characteristics’ as one category of ‘conditioning factors’.
Institutional conditioning factors

These constitute the context in which NSPs and government agencies operate. These conditioning factors include a range of political, laws, social and cultural institutions. The WPA research hypothesises that the institutional context conditions the formation of the organisations: their interests; values, ideologies, understandings and goals; assets and capacity; decision-making processes and organisational structures affecting the agenda and commitments that organisations bring to the encounter with ‘partners’; and their incentives for entering into relationships. The key issues identified and discussed in the literature as representative of institutional conditioning factors are historical influences, legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, globalisation forces, donor influences and state regime type. In a special edition of the *Journal of International Development* (2006), Tvedt, Nelson, Seckinelgin, Lewis and Opoku-Mensah provide valuable contributions to better understand the influence of all institutional factors conditioning NSP-government relationships described in this literature review.

History

Several studies provided rich detail of political, social, economic and/or cultural historical aspects influencing NSP-government relationships in various ways. Historical influences are a central component to all stages of the WPA research at the contextual (i.e. country), organisational and relationship levels. Several of the empirical studies referred to in this review examined historical aspects as the focus of their studies, whereas other studies explored them to different degrees as background to the evolution of the relationship under study. Sen’s (1999) study that carefully tracks the history of NGO-government relationships in India is a valuable input to better understand historical influences represented in the WPA flow diagram and those emerging from the WPA research in each case country.

Legislation and legal requirements

Legislation defines the environments in which NGOs operate, restricting or enabling NGO activities. The WPA research has prioritised the identification and analysis of legal requirements for the registration and activities of NSPs in each country. Mayhew’s (2005) detailed empirical study on the legislative histories of NGO-government relationships in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Vietnam has particular relevance to the WPA research, especially with its geographical focus in South Asia.

Policy and standards

The degree of influence of policy objectives and standards as conditioning factors of NSP-government relationships varies with particular sectoral programmes, context and the approaches taken by various stakeholders. Some policies explicitly state the importance of partnerships between NSPs and government in successfully delivering basic services. Successful service delivery is often equated to achieving policy targets, which is sometimes seen as being more possible through a collaborative approach. Through an implicit comparative advantage approach, partnerships are often portrayed as a valuable way of achieving policy ends. The WPA research has identified key sector-specific policy areas or programmes for study, in which there are expectations of partnership at an international as well as national level. The articles published in a special edition of the *Public Administration and Development* journal in 2006 as a result of the research undertaken by Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom explored forms of engagement between NSPs and government agencies. The WPA research builds upon that research to examine more closely the dynamics of NSP-government relationships in each policy area and sector programme.

Globalisation

Globalisation was identified as separate but linked issue with other conditioning factors; several authors highlight the significance of globalisation in influencing NSP-government relationships. Global forces may be influential through policies and donor preferences. Bouget and Prouteau
(2002) provide a constructive discussion of the implications of internationalisation/globalisation for national government-NGO relations, as noted in the review.

**Donors**
The greater part of the relevant literature has argued that donor agencies have a direct impact on the dynamics of NSP-government interactions through their control of funding, knowledge, opportunities and constraints. The influence of donor agencies is at all levels – incentives, design, objectives, implementation techniques and target/measurement expectations. The WPA research framework has included examination of donor influences within each case study. Some literature on the influence of donor agencies on NSP-government relationships is particularly worthwhile. The study undertaken by Lister (2000) on a relationship between a national NGO, international NGO and a bi-lateral donor agency provides insight into the different forms of power each organisation has on the other and on the divergent perspectives and value each places on the other.

**Political regime**
The dynamics of NSP-government relationships vary with different political regimes. The nature of the state and socio-political contexts under which NSPs emerge are essential for understanding NSP-government relationships. NSP-government relationships are the product of the space created by the government over time. The WPA research is investigating patterns of NSP-government relationships in association with different governmental regimes in each country, over time. Pereira (2005) provides particular insight into the role of the state in determining NSP-government relationships through an empirical study comparing health sector reform efforts through NSP-government relationships in Chile and Uruguay.

**Nature of organisations**
The nature of the NSP and different levels of government involved in the particular relationship under study within each of the cases is a core area of the WPA research. The key issues identified and discussed in the literature as representative of the nature of the organisation: different levels of government, NSPs and their origins and values; the internal management of NSPs; boundaries; civil society and the state; networks, alliances, coalitions, linkages of NSPs and government agencies; key individuals/leaders.

Dynamics of NSP-government relationships are different at different levels of government - the relationship has different dynamics and types of interaction. The unit of analysis within the WPA research includes different levels of government. Interviews have been carried out with members of the local, district, regional and national governments. Thompson’s (2005) study using governmentality theory to examine relationships between different levels of government in the UK is a useful study demonstrating how the internal organisation of government relies on a network that is defined both by their geographical territories and functional remit.

The foundational values, mission and/or vision and the meanings organisations ascribe to ‘public action’ and/or development objectives condition an organisation’s overall agenda as well as relationships with other organisations. Understanding the internal power dynamics, management and decision-making processes of NSPs and government agencies is important to understanding the dynamics of relationships. In spite of the comparative advantage claim that NSPs tend to be less hierarchically managed than government agencies, the literature indicates that NSPs are not necessarily democratic within their own institutions; rather it is common that they are authoritarian, competitive, classist and elitist.

A primary issue of NSP-government relationship is that of the definition of boundaries – of the organisations themselves, between civil society and the government, within and between networks, coalitions and alliances of various organisations, and dimensions of the NSP-
government relationship. These boundaries may change shape temporally and spatially in any given context.

The issue of civil society is an important issue in the literature, but only needs to be acknowledged as a peripheral rather than central issue in our research study. Lewis’s (2004) study of the role of civil society in Bangladesh is a valuable overview of contextual understandings of the boundaries between civil society and the state. 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. Alliances and networks that are associated with NSP-government relationships may include international, national and local NSPs. The varied layers of NSPs reinforce the multi-dimensionality and complexity of NSP-government relationships and their associated networks and alliances. The WPA research examines and defines particular boundaries of each NSP-government relationship under study, particularly the various networks and alliances associated with the relationship. Hilhorst’s (2003) ethnographic study is the most relevant, for the purposes of the WPA research, examining the internal dynamics of NSPs and their associated networks, including relationships with government agencies. Henry et al. (2005) is also a useful reference as it discusses different theories used to understand networks.

Several sources argue that the founding and development of NGOs can often be attributed to a selection of key individuals who often have charismatic qualities. Although context is important as it structures actions at an organisational level, it does not determine NSP-government relationships. Rather, individual actors are critical as active agents determining all aspects of relationships of NSPs with different levels of government, donor agencies, other NSPs and civil society organisations. Ramanath’s (2005) comparative study of three NGOs in Mumbai is the most valuable study that examines the evolution of NGOs, their internal dynamics, the central role of individuals and associated networks as conditioning dynamics within NSP and government relationships.

Agendas for public action

The key issues identified within institutional and organisational conditioning factors contribute to explaining the ‘agendas’ for public action that NSPs and government bring to a relationship with each other. The literature highlighted several key issues as representative of the agenda of engagement: pre-conditions for successful collaboration, incentives for collaboration and the design of the relationship.

Locating the incentives for each organisation to participate in the relationship is a primary concern of the WPA research. The WPA research is looking not only at financial incentives, but also ideological and other non-material incentives. The design of the relationship, particularly who was involved and to what extent is crucial to understanding relationship dynamics. The WPA research is also exploring how incentives have changed over time. There were only two sets of empirical studies focusing on conceptualisations of public action as determining factors influencing the dynamics of NSP-government relationships, Welle (2001, and the articles by Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom (in 2006). The WPA research greatly enhances this gap in research on NSP-government relationships.

The incentives for NSPs and government agencies to collaborate in providing basic services include a broad range of material and non-material features that are historically and contextually specific. The literature provides a range of recommendations for what pre-conditions might be necessary to establish ‘successful’ collaboration between NSPs and government agencies. Several highlight the importance of the dynamics of the design of the relationship as establishing the precedent for the success or failure of the relationship as it evolves. Lewis’s (1998) ethnographic study of a multi-organisational partnership in Bangladesh is valuable to understand
how the dynamics of NSP-government relationships influence the level of success in a partnership, with particular emphasis on communication.

**Nature of relationships**

The nature of NSP-government relationships is the primary unit of analysis in the WPA research, implying an exploration of the methods, modes and strategies of interaction. The WPA research is looking at the vertical, formal, contractual arrangements of the relationship and the horizontal, informal interactions occurring between different individuals within the relationship as well as within networks and alliances associated with the relationship. The key issues identified and discussed in the literature as representative of the nature of the relationship between NSPs and government agencies are dimensions of NSP-government relationships, roles of participants, interactions and dynamics, formal and informal, methods, modes and strategies, accountability and autonomy/room for manoeuvre.

NSPs often simultaneously carry out service delivery, advocacy and/or policy dialogue activities through a range of relationships. The roles that NGOs, different levels of government, donor agencies and associated network organisations play in a relationship over time are important to understanding the dynamics of the relationship. Several sources differentiated between service delivery and advocacy roles performed in NSP-government relationships. Matlin’s (2001) discussion of organisational and sectoral domains in which interactions occur between the state, the market, NGOs and civil society, is a useful overview of potential conflicts over roles of advocacy and service provision.

An NSP may have diverse relationships. Several publications explored the multiple dimensions through which relationships occur between NSPs, different levels of government, other NSPs and donor agencies. Nelson’s (2006) framework which suggests six different dimensions of relationships (i.e. interpersonal, technical, cultural, financial, legal and political) to examine interactions between donor agencies and NSPs is a valuable contribution to the WPA research.

Interactions between government and NSPs tend to be formalised in some capacity (in contracts or some other written form), although there are always other informal modes of contact associated with the organisation’s alliances and networks, particularly through key individuals within the organisation. The literature indicates that formal and informal interactions occur simultaneously and are often antagonistic to each other (e.g. collaborative and conflictual). Pettigrew’s (2003) action research on a multi-organisational partnership provides a useful overview of the interplay between formal (i.e. ‘front-staging’) and informal (i.e. ‘back-staging’) interactions that simultaneously occur within partnerships between different organisations, including NSPs and the government.

There is broad range of empirical, theoretical and polemical or exploratory literature that analyses the modes and strategies of interaction that each member of an NSP-government relationship draws on. Ramanath’s (2005) study rigorously examines the levels of participation, modes and frequency of communication, strategic tactics used by each organisation, and the types of power relations. This is a valuable guide for the WPA research.

**Accountability and autonomy** are each primary issues within our research. The literature indicates that accountability is a key issue permeating all stages of NSP-government relationships: accountability of the NSP, the government agency, the donor, other affiliated individuals and partners, and accountability to the poor. The maintenance of organisational identity and autonomy, particularly that of the NSP in NSP-government relationships, is a central issue. The WPA research examines how different organisations and individuals within the relationship are accountable and the ways in which each seeks to maintain its own autonomy through the course of the relationship. Hilhorst’s (2003) notion of ‘room for manoeuvre’ is a useful conception for
determining levels of autonomy in the WPA research. Fowler’s (1997) detailed discussion of NGOs’ struggles for autonomy and identity provides valuable insights for the WPA research.

The effects of NSP-government relationships back on the formation of ‘partner’ organisations, their legitimacy, autonomy and sustainability and their public action commitments are being explored in the WPA research. Isomorphism has become an important issue in the literature; our research should be examining whether or not isomorphism has occurred as an effect of the relationship.
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Annex 1: Logic of the ‘Whose Public Action’ Research Flow Diagram

Underlying the research questions is a causal flow that is expressed in the research flow diagram. This indicates a hypothetical ‘real-life’ flow,

- From a range of economic, social, cultural factors (institutions) that have historically conditioned the goals, public action agendas, interests and organization of government and non-state service deliverers
- To the formation of the organization, its resources and goals/agenda
- Through the encounters between the actors in a relationship to work together in service delivery
- To the effects of the relationship in possibly redefining the goals, public action agendas, identities, interests and organization.

Our perspective of the flow diagram is not static; a historical perspective is fundamental. Views about public action are formed and re-formed. Our research has a particular interest in the forming and re-forming of non-governmental public action in these encounters. However, we are concerned also with the conditioning factors (probably best described as institutions) that operate on government because these influence the nature of the relationship between them. If there was room, all the same conditioning factors would also appear on the left of the diagram.

To spell this out in more detail and working across the chart from the right to the left:

Service characteristics: We recognize that the characteristics or features of service sectors may give rise to different conditioning factors and relationships between government and NSPs. In particular they are likely to have different technical-economic characteristics (e.g. monopoly, information asymmetry, networked services), different levels of political salience, different balances of power between principals (clients, citizens and policymakers) and agents (e.g. professions, unions), and there will be ideologies or values attached to that particular area of public life in particular cultures (water, sanitation, education and healthcare). It would not make much sense to try to characterize a whole service sector (e.g. healthcare) but it might be useful to look at the characteristics of the particular sub-sector we study (e.g. primary healthcare).

Macro-conditioning factors: There are some macro-level (i.e. beyond the particular case) institutions that are likely to affect the way that organizations operate, define their agendas and influence their relationships. These may be somewhat similar across sectors, but may well affect them differently: the political régime type (e.g. closed and exclusive or open and inclusive); authority structures in terms both of traditional or religious authority and of formal systems of political control at different levels of government; legal and constitutional requirements (to the extent that they are effective); the past history of relations between government and NSP; and perhaps macro-economic dependence and the role of donors in influencing national policies.

Meso-conditioning factors: These are factors (again these are probably mainly institutional factors) that directly relate to the organizations we are studying. By setting the framework of constraints and opportunities within which they operate, they condition organizations’ room for manoeuvre. On whom are they financial dependent? To whom are they accountable? How (far) do they operate in networks with other organizations? How far are they governed by policy objectives and standards set elsewhere?
**Nature of the organization:** The above factors help to condition three aspects of organizational life, but these also have their own internal dynamics, based on the organization’s history, previous commitments and current membership:

- The organization’s arrangements for decision-making and leadership, particularly in regard to decisions about policy, action, finances and staffing.
- Interests, identities and understandings within the organization and how these coalesce into goals and views about proper ways of executing organizational agendas (e.g. whether to engage in client participation).
- The material or social resources they can deploy to support their position.

**Agenda of engagement:** Together the previous institutional and organizational factors contribute to explaining the ‘agendas’ for public action that NSPs and government bring to the relationship with each other. This column suggests two aspects in which agendas are set and affect the relationship with other actors in the ‘partnership’. First is the definition (both understandings and commitments) of the ends and means of public action (e.g. urban slum sanitation implemented through participation). Second are the material or ideological incentives to collaborate or not to collaborate.

**Nature of the relationship:** Government and NSP organizations with the hinterlands described above meet in a relationship about service delivery. We expect them to have different agendas for public action and it is likely that in some respect these will be in contention. Given the deep roots of their agendas, we would expect some of the rivalry to be threatening to an organization’s agenda for public action and even to its sense of identity.

**Feedback to organizational change:** Because they arise from underlying conditions, organizations’ agendas can rarely change without challenging and changing their goals and identities, and perhaps even challenging the underlying institutional environment itself (organizational networks, funding sources and accountabilities etc).