

# Reconciling Our Differences: Making Partnerships for Sustainability-Oriented Innovation Work

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## **Abstract**

Companies increasingly collaborate with others to deliver sustainability-oriented innovations, but tensions can arise. Through a multiple-case study of eight partnerships, a framework is developed with five dimensions of tension-creating difference between partners, and five 'reconciliation strategies' deployed in response. Goal salience, goal instrumentality and collaborative intent tensions go beyond differences in institutional logics, occurring not only when partnering with nonprofits but also between for-profits. Temporal focus and language are previously unconsidered tensions. Reconciliation strategies include engagement logic alignment and cultural bridging which create alignment at varying levels of a partnership. Partner positioning, project scoping and success measurement add nuance to the 'separation and synthesis' typology in the paradox literature. These insights extend previous work on inter-organizational partnerships.

**Keywords:** *Innovation; Stakeholder ; institutional*

**Track:** Innovation Management & New Product Development