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The Paradigm of Partnership Relations as the Basis for the Emergence and Development of Cross-Cluster Partnership

Abstract: The need to study the signs and characteristics of cross-cluster partnership because of the factors of the emergence of this phenomenon and the regularities of its development led to the analysis of the concepts of “partnership” and “cluster”. The study aims to analyze the scientific achievements of scientists regarding the concept of “partnership”. The article considers the existing scientific doctrine of “partnership”. The key signs and characteristics of partnership are analyzed. The economic capabilities of clusters and the features of their internal development and functioning are summarized. The author used scientific research methods such as dialectical, system analysis, analysis and synthesis, and generalization. Based on the study results, the author concluded regarding the desire of clusters to cooperate in the form of macro-cluster formations, which are characterized by signs of partnership. The presence of standard features between the scientifically studied concept of “partnership” and the joint activities of clusters in the form of macro-cluster formations gives grounds to assert the partnership factor, which leads to the emergence of macro-cluster formations.

Keywords: cluster, connectivity, cross-cluster partnership, intercluster partnership, interregional cooperation.

Introduction

The lack of a normative and scientific definition of the concept of “cross-cluster partnership”, considering the stimulating factors of this phenomenon’s emergence and the regularities of its development, determines the relevance of the analysis of the existing scientific doctrine regarding the concepts of “partnership” and “cluster”.

The study aims to analyze scientists’ scientific achievements regarding the concept of “partnership,” its features, and its characteristics. It also investigates the manifestation of partnership in cluster management and the influence of the partnership factor on the cooperation of clusters within macro cluster formations.

Based on the purpose, the following tasks were solved:

- analyze internal content and characteristics of the concept of partnership;
- analyze the content of the business partnership as a special form of partnership;
- present concentration of business partnership as a factor in a new form of partnership.

The author used scientific research methods such as dialectical, system analysis, analysis and synthesis, and generalization.

Scientists such as M. Porter, M. Enright, S. Rosenfeld, M. Storper, P. Maskell, J. Kortright, O. Solwell, G. Lindqvist, K. Ketels, M. Voinarenko, V. Dubnytsky, S. Sokolenko, O. Amosha, N. Trushkina, V. Shiposha, M. Gudz, O. Zadoya, G. Pyatnytska, O. Samborsky, etc. have studied issues related to the development of economic clusters.

Despite the wide range of research in Ukrainian science on cluster topics and the characteristics of business communities, some issues require further consideration. Among them is the determination of the characteristics of cross-cluster partnership as a modern and effective form of economic recovery of Ukraine in the post-war period. The relevance of this issue and its problems determines the direction of the author's scientific research and its goal and objectives.

Results

Internal Content and Characteristics of the Concept of Partnership

When studying the history of forming partnerships in business relations, it is worth paying attention to the origin of this concept. The term “partnership” comes from the English word “part”.

Plato wrote, “A city, in my opinion, is born when each of us is insufficient for himself and needs many.” From this, it follows that the basis of partnership is the unification of people's activities through joint participation to ensure effective joint activity.

Michael Porter considered partnerships to be “commercial relations” and “legal rules of competition,” and he emphasized that the further development of the economy depends on “strengthening the role of contracts and agreements” ([Porter, 2020](#)).

In the monograph, N. Chukhray and Ya. Kryvoruchko state that when establishing partnership relations, in addition to suppliers, manufacturers, intermediaries, and consumers, attention should be paid to the relations of the enterprise with other institutions. According to these researchers, the main areas of partnership relations are worth dividing into five areas, and the most important are the relations of the enterprise with subjects of the internal and external environment. In particular, relations with subjects of the internal environment involve establishing relations with the enterprise's personnel, organizational units, and shareholders. Relations with the external environment include business partnerships with relevant intermediaries, end consumers, customers, influential institutions, suppliers of resources, and service providers ([Ganushchak-Efimenko et al., 2018](#)).

In the broadest sense, partnership is a form of organization of social life that aims to create balanced relations between people and recognize and support their autonomy and self-sufficiency to achieve mutually beneficial results.

Partnership has several characteristic features that distinguish it from other forms of relations:

- (1) Horizontal orientation of social interaction. Potential partners should take an equal part in forming joint social activity.

- (2) Individualistic approach of the relationship participants. The partnership participants maintain a distance from the other side of the dialogue, which contributes to the priority consideration of their own interests.
- (3) Interdependence in achieving the desired results.
- (4) Contractual nature of decision-making.
- (5) Consensus orientation in the formation of social relations.

Thus, the study of the economic essence of partnership relations provides grounds for identifying their common characteristics, among which the following are of particular importance: the voluntary and contractual nature of the relationship, the common goal of the activity, unity of interests, joint responsibility, and risks. Based on these aspects, a business partnership can be considered as a set of various types of interactions performed based on voluntary contractual relations aimed at combining or distributing resources, joint responsibility, and risks to protect and strengthen the competitive position in the market and achieve positive results of activity (*Krekhovskaya, 2014*).

The Content of the Business Partnership as a Special Form of Partnership

The theory of cluster economic management emerged as a theory that studies the formation and development of economic competitiveness. Its peculiarity is that it defines a new structural element—a cluster—in the set of competitive entities. The cluster is a new tool for organizing the economy, promoting its dynamic development, and being the principle of implementing state policy in the regions. This theory is widely used in different countries.

The term “cluster” means a group, accumulation, or gathering (e.g., people, objects) or very close elements; it can also mean a bee swarm. That is, the term “cluster” has many meanings, but the main essential feature of its essence is the union of individual elements (particles) so that they form a single whole to perform a certain function or achieve a specific goal (*Mulyar, 2014*).

According to N.M. Vnukova, a modern cluster is a voluntary partnership association based on territorial grounds of goods producers with suppliers and other institutions, aimed at obtaining aggregate economic benefits based on the comprehensive satisfaction of their production requirements and consumer requests (*Vnukova, 2007*).

According to domestic cluster participants, a cluster is not just a group of companies but goes much further. This helps expand opportunities for business development and self-development. The cluster provides joint communication within the group and with the outside world, authorities, and educational institutions. It also offers the opportunity to gain new knowledge, skills, and other benefits.

According to research and calculations, companies operating in a cluster automatically occupy a more advantageous position than independent businesses. Clusters provide the following opportunities:

- (1) Strengthen the specialization and division of labor processes between participants.
- (2) Attract a wider range of customers through close interaction between producers and consumers of services.
- (3) Reduce the cost of services and products manufactured and sold based on joint activities.
- (4) Strengthen the flow of ideas and information between participants.
- (5) Increase the level of innovation in the production of services.

- (6) Use local natural resources more effectively.
- (7) Create healthy social capital and balance market efficiency and social harmony.

According to scientists A.V. Karpenko and N.M. Karpenko, competition in an economic cluster has a “soft” nature, which means that the rivalry between its participants is based on the principles of partnership and complementarity. This contributes to establishing mutually beneficial relations, characterized as competitive interaction. In this process, participants in an economic cluster unite on the principles of competition and partnership, jointly create added value, and agree on its distribution to achieve mutual benefit (*Karpenko & Karpenko, 2023*).

Studying the world experience of economic clusters, it is worth considering that the cluster strategy requires significant time to achieve actual results. A successful cluster can flourish no earlier than 5-6 years after its creation. This is explained by several factors: it is necessary to ensure mutual trust between the partners, establish effective communications for exchanging knowledge and innovations, and develop an effective organizational and economic mechanism for cooperation (*Grebesbkova & Gaivoronskaya, 2012*).

According to H. Mazur, initially, greater productivity of cluster participants is achieved through the use of natural, geographical, and historical advantages inherent in a specific territory and its resources (e.g., land, mining, human or recreational). However, these advantages alone cannot be used without establishing effective and high-quality production of goods or a set of services. This is necessary to create direct and permanent trusting relationships between participants in the technological process based on their mutual interest in joint activities. At the same time, the effect of scale is manifested in increasing production volumes and reducing transaction costs. Therefore, the cluster development organization aims to improve business competitiveness (*Mazur, 2022*).

Thus, research shows that a cluster, as a sustainable partnership of enterprises, organizations, and individuals, has excellent potential that exceeds the simple sum of the potentials of individual components. This increase occurs due to the effective use of opportunities and long-term cooperation of partners, a combination of collaboration and competition. Practically speaking, we can talk about a specific synergistic effect that clusters create (*Sovershenna, 2017*).

Concentration of Business Partnership as a Factor in a New Form of Partnership

Cluster partnerships constitute a significant part of the industrial landscape in Europe. They are dynamic geographical concentrations of interconnected firms and economic entities that have reached a sufficient scale to develop specialized expertise, services, resources, suppliers, and skills. According to the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, such cluster partnerships comprise various participants, including business companies, research institutions, science and technology parks, financial service providers, non-profit organizations, etc. (*Shkoda, 2022*).

Investigating the issue of cluster partnerships, M.S. Shkoda notes that the role of cluster partnerships in the EU is to solve the following tasks:

- providing strategic guidance on recovery and other systemic problems;
- developing and implementing industrial policy using multi-level governance;
- ensuring communication between entities from different EU Member States, regions, and their industrial ecosystems;

- managing the process of entrepreneurship development within the framework of smart specialization strategies;
- active participation in retraining and upskilling;
- expanding international markets for non-EU countries;
- directing EU public funding to support small and medium-sized businesses;
- creating its potential to promote cooperation, capital development, and dissemination of technological and market information and provide specialized services (*Shkoda, 2022*).

Thus, cooperation between clusters can form a consortium characterized by short-term ties. Experience shows that the most effective collaboration is between 3–5 clusters of a grouping. This size of the consortium allows for specific actions and cooperation and simplifies the achievement of a common understanding for coordinating a single international strategy (*Ganushchak-Efimenko, 2018*).

Conclusion

Clusters strive to cooperate in the form of macro-cluster formations, which, by their nature, are characterized by partnership features. Thus, participants in micro-cluster formations directly engage in joint actions to solve systemic problems in the economic sector. In contrast, thanks to multi-level management, each participant retains the individualism of their interests. The interdependence of participants in achieving a specific goal and their desire to find consensus on multi-level management of regions and ecosystems leads to the coordination of a single strategy. The presence of standard features between the scientifically researched concept of “partnership” and the joint activities of clusters in macro cluster formations gives grounds to assert the partnership factor as one that leads to cross-cluster partnerships.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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