

Exploring Sino-British transnational educational partnerships: exploring the operational relationships of faculty members and the implications for TNE partnership development



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TNE Partnerships

- Approx. 457,170 overseas students study UK HE as part of collaborations between partner institutions (HESA, n.d).
- Numerous modes of cooperation with varying levels of formalisation exist: validation, franchise, articulation, 'joint' programmes, IBC, distance-learning etc.
- As alliances grow in complexity and involve wider sets of stakeholders, understanding how partners **interact and respond to each other arguably offers a new way in which to evaluate international partnership development.**



Analysing TNE Partnership Phases





Operationalizing TNE Partnerships

- **The operational phase:** a process, consisting of agents (faculty members) who generate, and participate in operational activities, in order to achieve outcomes that stimulate positive relational developments over time.
- Requires agents to work together to negotiate and complete tasks as productively as possible – positively transform relationships and the overall partnership.
- Operational activities effect faculty member relationships, thereby effecting TNE partnership developments over time.



Activities & Relationships

- Social capital represents a critical component in the forming and maintaining of **long-term, successful partnerships**.
- Social capital important in the development of integrative bonds between faculty members.
- Social capital occurs when resources embedded in the network are mobilised and accessed by faculty members for purposive action. Benefits are created.
- However, operational activities effect the emotion, behaviour and attitudes of operational faculty members. Are benefits still created?



Activities & Relationships

This research contributes to our understanding of TNE partnership development by answering:

1. What **effect** do the outcomes of operational activities have on faculty member relationships?
2. What **underlying forces influence** faculty member activities and how do these effect the development of relationships?
3. Is it possible for faculty members to **expand and transform** their TNE partnerships in order to improve them over time?
4. Is it possible to provide **insight into more effective ways** in which to construct TNE partnerships so efficiency, effectiveness and longevity is maximised?



TNE 'Operational Phase' Framework

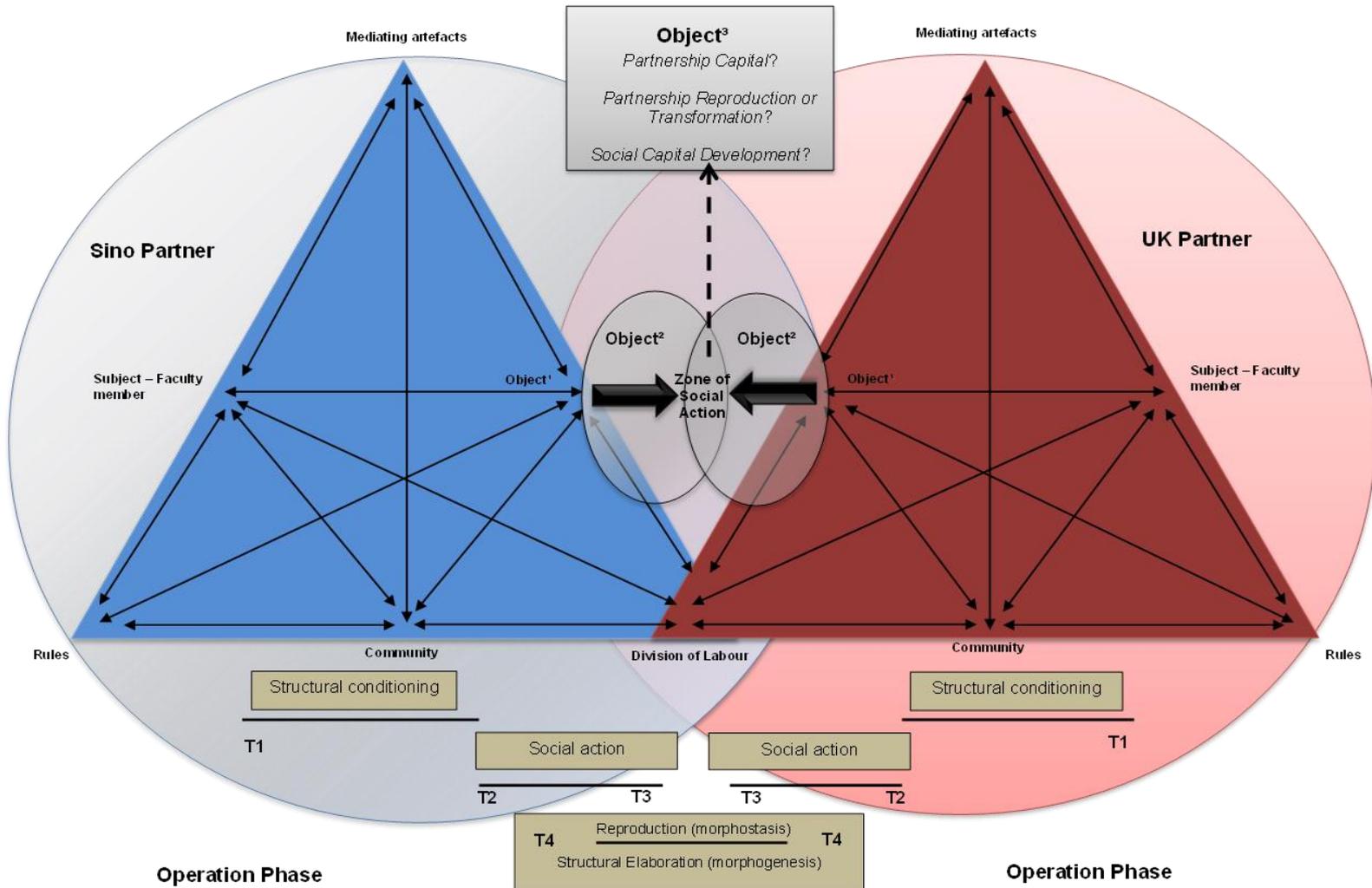


Figure 8: Operational level transnational partnership development: a fusion model (Adapted from Engeström, 2001, p. 13; Eddy, 2010, p. 50; Archer, 1995, p. 157; Wohlstetter et al., 2005, p. 420).



Research Sample

- Employing a stratified critical realist ontology, and a qualitative multiple-case study design of 2 Sino-British TNE partnerships.
- Sample:
 - Partnership A Business discipline, 6 faculty interviewed (3 UK, 3 China expats) 6 year duration, UK HEI A, host institute Sino X
 - Partnership B STEM discipline, 4 faculty interviewed (2 UK, 2 China expats) 8 year duration, UK HEI B, host institute Sino X
- Data collected March-July 2014.



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Time

- Time zones/time delay create challenges for Sino faculty:
 - **Service** – UK cannot always provide access to resources at required times, cultural calendars differ.
 - **Responsiveness** – waiting, postponed activities.
 - **Motivation** – powerless, helpless, frustrated, loss of academic identity.
- Activity instruction, design, innovation, evaluation, reconfiguration all require time.
- Imposing insensitive regulations, high workloads, inadequate ICT, multiple stakeholder objectives, effects activities, time and its allocation.



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Time solutions

- Change *perceptions* of time:
 - Consider it as an integral intangible resource, required to build relationships.
 - Time must be made accessible to faculty members.
 - Partnership infrastructure can manipulate *perceptions of time*.
 - “Create” time /speed up activity production and response times by considering **secondment** (B).
 - Provides immediate access to host institution in terms of resources such as tacit knowledge and support.



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Legacy

- Past faculty member interactions effect present and future activity production.
- Previous experiences create memories and emotions that “live” in the partnership activity system, influencing engagement.
- A history of **positive social encounters** between partners feeds back into the system setting the tone for present and future engagements.



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Legacy Solutions

- Create a history of joint negotiation, problem solving and shared vision:
 - Both partners transparent about partnership goals and objectives.
 - Partnership infrastructures should be designed to enable faculty members to think through process of engagements prior to action (links to time), generating beneficial outcomes.
 - A “proven track record” provides senior managers with the confidence to enable/ implement further partnership developments/innovations.



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Cultural Difference

- Hidden agendas and/or diametrically opposed cultural systems can affect operational activities.
- Different or “perceived hidden” agendas may create assumptions, tensions and conflicts across operational teams, effecting communication.
- Contentious activities seem to be those around **assessment and feedback**.
- Cultural difference can produce uncomfortable working environments (A), but is not always about total incompatibility, but about moments of strain that require immediate attention (B).



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Cultural Difference Solutions

- Create an ethnorelative rather than ethnocentric environment:
 - Participating HEIs need to embed cross-cultural training and knowledge exchanges.
 - Consider management and leadership skills of faculty members- encourage respect, integration and awareness.
 - Involve faculty members in strategic discussions, understand their role, how their work is beneficial.
 - Use contact activities like FIFO, peer observations, CPD trips to develop empathy and learning.



Key Partnership Features

Feature	Required by Operational Teams	Problematic Mechanisms
<p>Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must ensure the continuous flow of information between academics. • Transparent, appropriate and relevant to task at hand. • Updates on programme or partnership changes so communication remains reliable and relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hidden agendas influence faculty responses. • Lack of time effects communication around tasks- particular instruction. • Poor legacies effect communication whereby previous negative interactions effect current interactions.
<p>Resource transfer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access/ ability to mobilise tangible and intangible resources critical in activity production. • Provide activities with purpose, clarity, safety and materials to produce the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource access and/or applicability may be regulated by host institution/country. • Poor communication creates lack of access to tangible/ intangible resources mean activities lose focus. • Power relations (agendas) controlling resource access/ mobilisation?
<p>Emotional states</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotion integral to action- mediates performance in a task. • Tasks used in evaluating competency and capability, yet dependent on resources access– “do I have access to resources to do this task well?” “Am I being made to fail”? • Being “good, praised and respected” creates positive emotions and develops confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time to access and mobilise resources creates apathy and withdrawal. • Poor previous interactions make it harder to overcome bias, apathy and pessimism. • Hidden agendas influences communication creating negative feelings- upset, anger, fear, sadness, anxiety, stress.



Partnership A

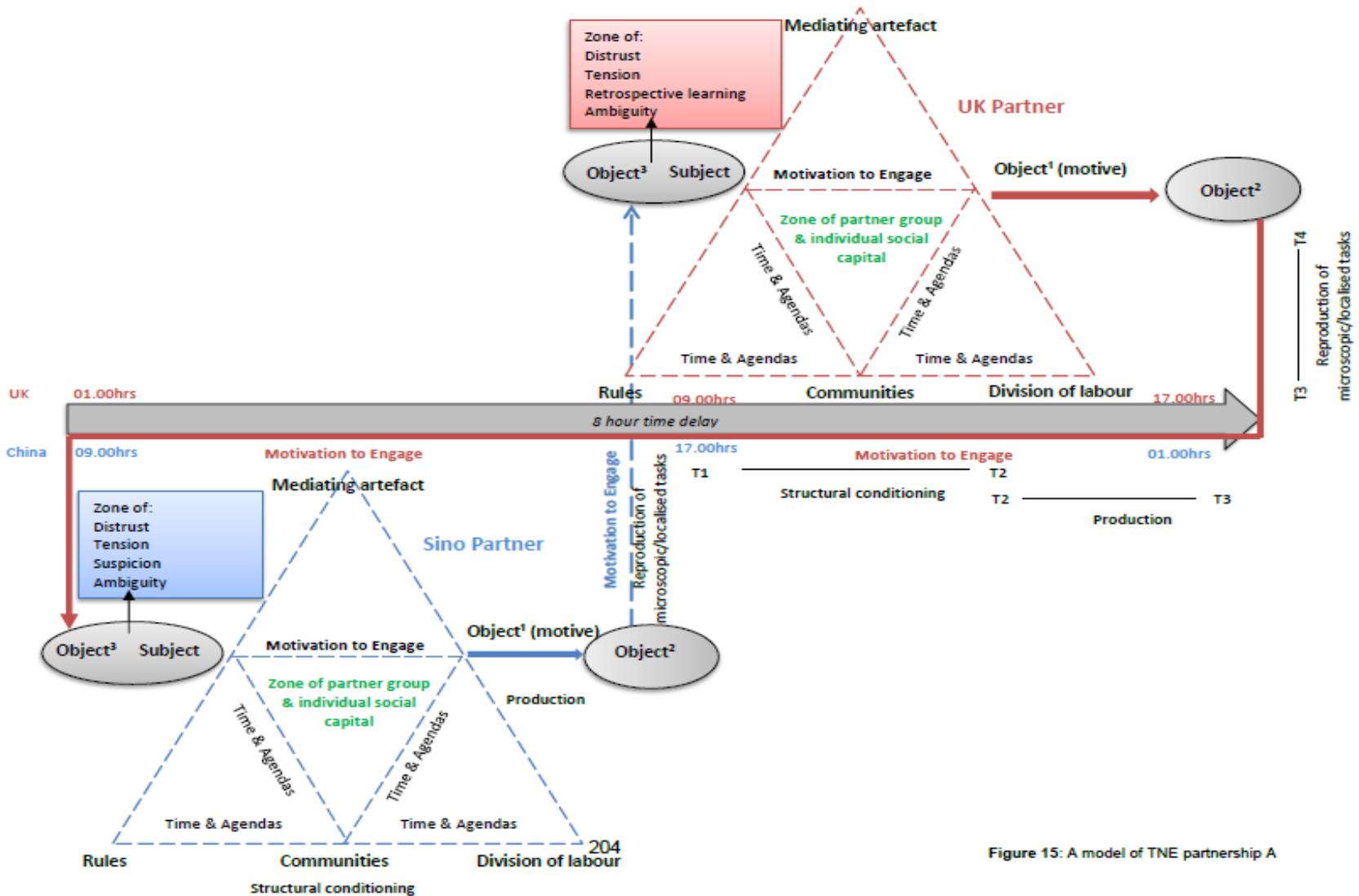


Figure 15: A model of TNE partnership A



The Ideal Operational TNE Model?

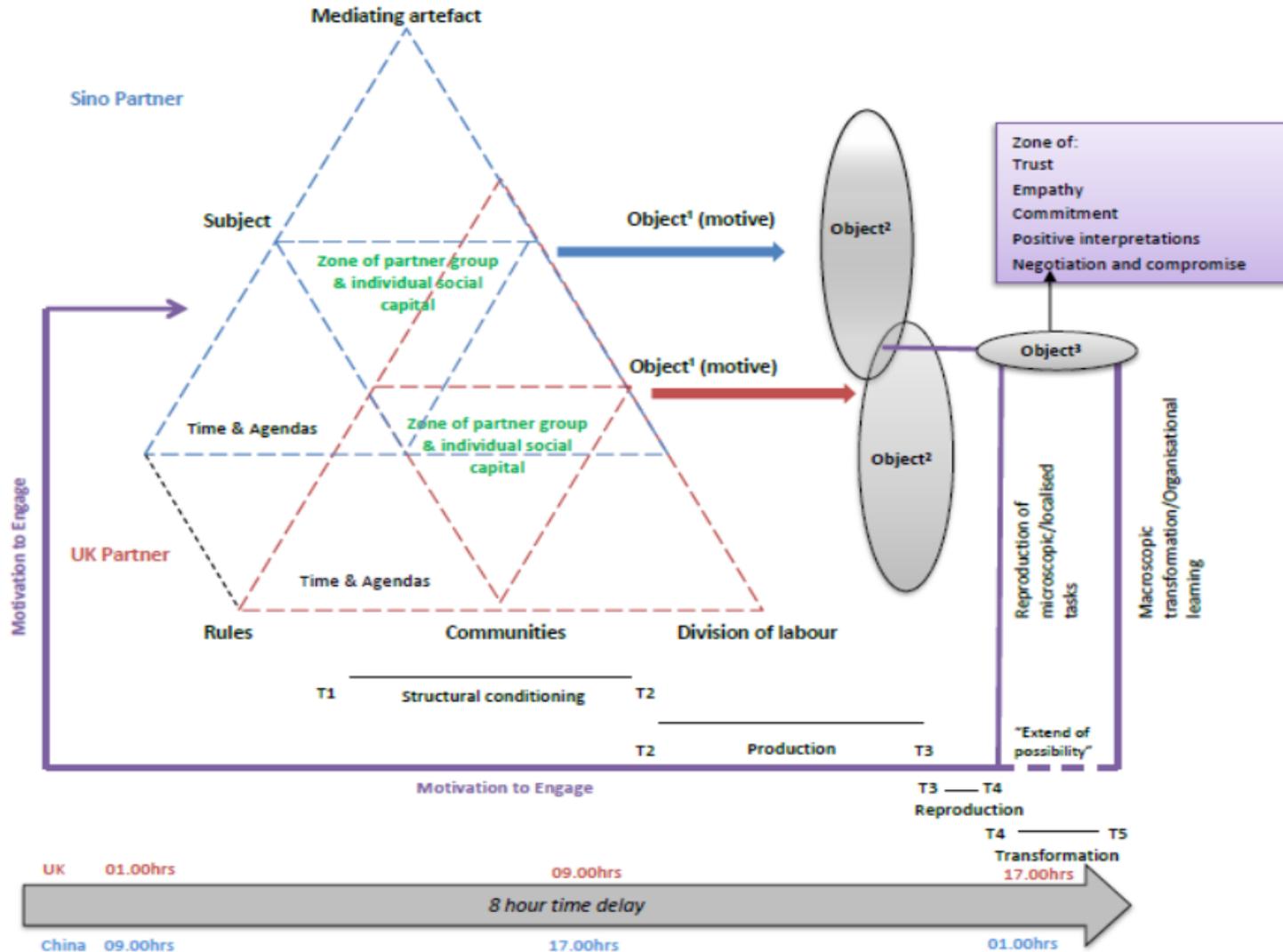
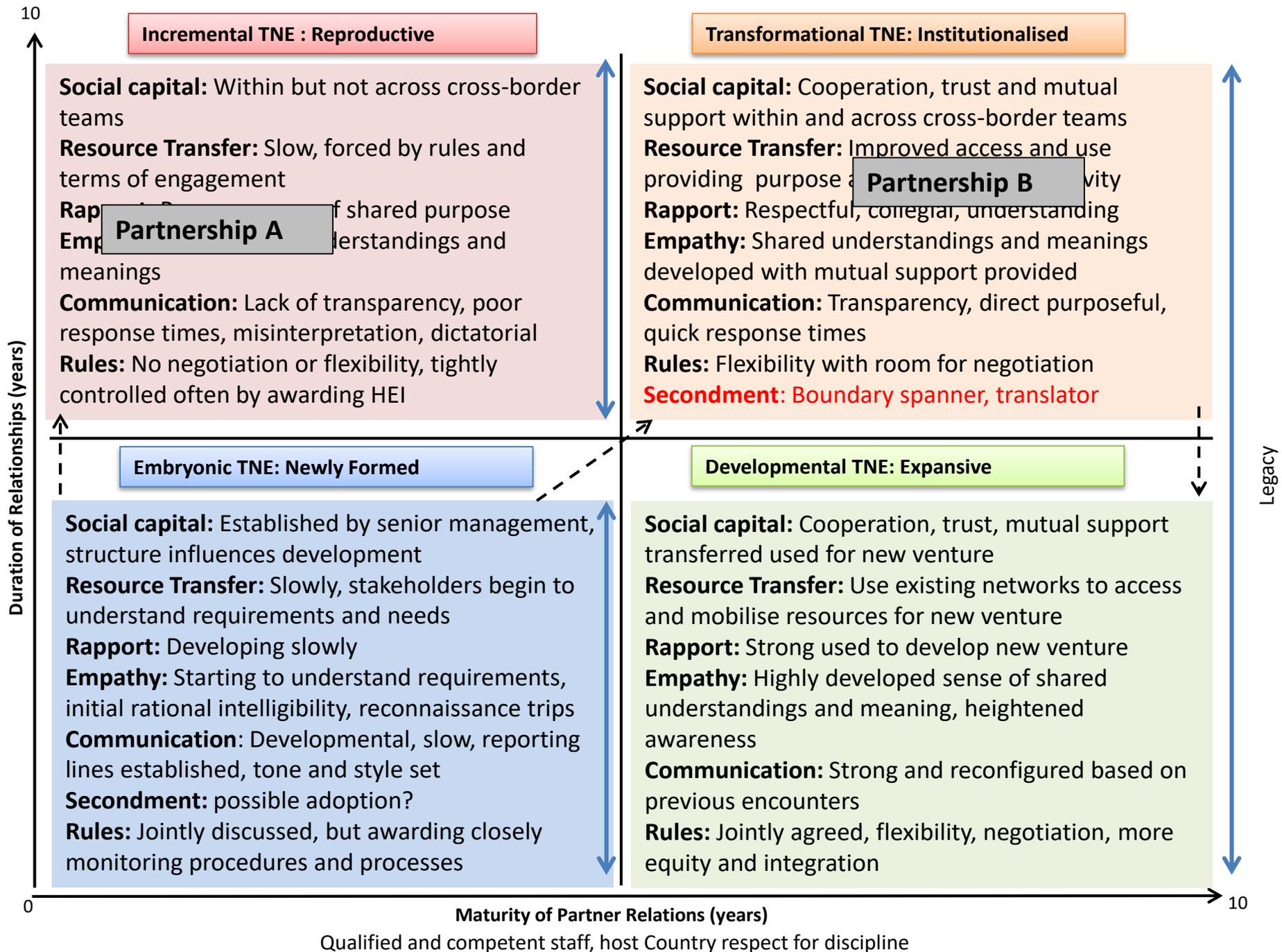


Figure 17: A model of TNE partnership B





Conclusion

The operational phase is critical in enabling faculty members to develop beneficial relationships that affect TNE partnership developments over time.

Initiation

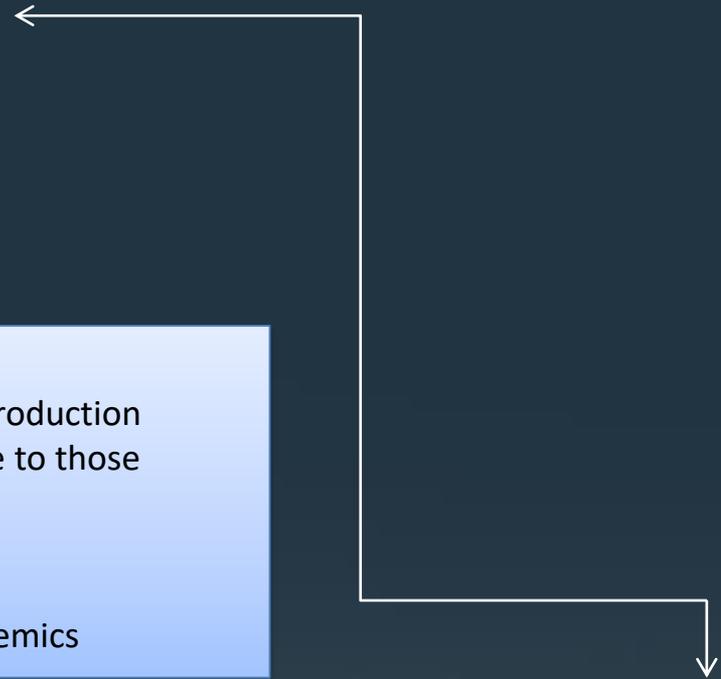
- Strategic aims and objectives set, purpose made transparent to operational stakeholders
- Time frames given for collaboration
- Secondment must be considered with suitable provisions
- Tangible and intangible resources identified and infrastructure developed to enable access and mobilisation
- Flexibility in terms of contract regulations- relationship first?

Implementation

- Purpose transparent underpins activity production
- Resources considered and made available to those operating provision
- Staff training provided
- Incentives
- Recruitment of qualified and skilled academics

Evaluation

- Ability to reconfigure activities to enhance future engagements, may require strategic changes



Xièxiè, thank you Wèntí, questions?

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