On the Art of Developing Partnerships

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Equal

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This study is based on studies of the development partnerships in the Swedish Equal Programme. More information on the Programme and on working in partnerships can be obtained from:

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Preface

This book has been jointly produced by participants in partnerships under the Equal Programme together with researchers who are conducting a research and development project on partnership. This co-operation has taken place within the framework of one of the National Thematic Groups (NTG) of the Equal Programme, NTG Partnership. This group was formed with the aim of assimilating and disseminating the experience of the participants on the theme of *partnership as a working method for development work*.

We have currently been working for two years with the aim of learning more about partnership and would now like to share the results of our work. In a mutual learning process on the part of both researchers and participants – on the basis of the experience of the participants – we have together described, discussed, thought about and analysed partnership. This book has grown from this work.

It is not our ambition to present ready-made solutions or to tell anyone how a partnership should be organised. On the other hand, we do want to give those who are interested facts and a basis for analysis so that they can, together with others, develop solutions that suit the tasks and the situations that they face.

NTG Partnership, the Equal Programme thematic group that has worked on the production of this book, has consisted of: Ulf Brangenfeldt, Arion Chryssafis, Sven-Olof Larsson, Solgun Lundgren, Lena Rogeland, Gisela Spak, Torsten Thunberg, Margareta Wandel and Annika Öhgren.

The researchers have acted as secretaries, discussion partners and critical sounding boards.

We would like to thank those responsible within the Equal Programme for funding the development work and the research that forms the basis of this work.

We would also like to thank the participants of various partnerships who have shared their experience and made valuable comments on the content of the book.

We hope that you as readers and users of the book will take part in an ongoing dialogue on how partnership can be used and developed in the future. Please feel free to contact us. You will find the telephone numbers of representatives of NTG Partnership and the researchers in the group at the back of the book.

Lindesberg, August 2005
The editorial committee:
Mats Andersson Lennart Svensson Sofia Wistus Carina Åberg

Content

Introduction

This book is about how you can work with development or, more precisely, how you can use partnerships to organise development. The book is based on the experience gained in development partnerships in one of the programmes of the European Social Fund, the Equal Programme, but we believe that this experience is generally applicable to other partnerships as well as to other forms of co-operation on development. We can highlight the possibilities and problems relating to working in partnerships and hope that the book can provide support for others, not by providing ready-made answers but rather by asking questions that will encourage reflection.

One of the reasons for producing this book was that we too wanted to learn more about partnerships – especially development partnerships. We wanted to understand their different phases – before, during and after the development work that a development partnership decides to take on. We wanted to know how partnerships can be organised and led, what impact the composition and selection of members has, how feedback to the organisations of each individual partner works, whether the work leads to any results, and if so whether the results are utilised and disseminated. We also wanted to learn more about transnational work in partnerships.

As our work is based on the experience gained in the Equal Programme, in which partnership is a prerequisite for the allocation of funds, our purpose is not to question partnership as an organisational form.[1] Instead, we wish to describe and analyse the experience gained in a way that will help you as a reader to reflect on and make your own well-considered decisions about your partnership. The examples that are presented here are therefore

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1. Other material will be published as a result of the research and development projects that are in progress within the framework of NTG Partnership (for example a doctoral thesis and scientific articles).

intended as starting points for reflection and dialogue, not as models or templates. The questions that are asked are concretised in some cases by the examples that are presented, but they are also based on the previous and general experience of the participants and the authors.

Much work remains to be done, as we still know far too little about to what extent partnership as a working method really can function innovatively and have a real structural impact. Is partnership a trend, like so much else that concerns development? We cannot answer this question, but hopefully we will be able to point to some of the possibilities and problems relating to working in partnerships so that your development work will be successful on the basis of the special conditions that apply in your unique situation.

A brief summary of the most important questions in the book

In the book, we have chosen to focus on the important possibilities and problems that, in our view, have a significant impact on the process of using partnerships to create innovation and development. Below, we present a summary of the questions that we feel are central to development work organised in the form of a partnership:

- Are all the relevant partners included in the partnership and have the problems that the partnership's work will address been defined jointly?
- How will a collective responsibility in which all the partners participate in the development of a common policy be ensured? What measures are required from the various actors/organisations to achieve both short-term results and long-term effects? Does the partnership have the support and understanding of the home organisation and management of each individual partner?
- Have the questions what, who, where and when been answered in relation to the problem to be solved, the influence of the target group, the time frame, follow-up and evaluation?
- Is there a vertical co-ordination of policy with all the decision-making bodies involved (at the EU, national, regional, and municipal levels)?

Is there a horizontal co-ordination of policy at the local level (public administration bodies, voluntary organisations, private institutions, employee organisations and business and industry)?

- Do the discriminated groups have real influence over the entire development process?

We will return to these questions below and also examine them in the light of examples taken from development partnerships in the Equal Programme.

The structure of the book

We treat the work that is conducted in a partnership as a process, i.e. something that takes place and changes over time. In order to mirror this process we apply a division into three different phases – *before*, *during* and *after* the development work that the development partnership has chosen to take on. In a background chapter, we present the Equal Programme, partnership as a method for driving development, development strategies and the issue of how partnerships can be organised to promote gender equality and inclusion. In the second part of the book, we present working in partnerships on the basis of the three phases mentioned above. Following a review of the three phases, we take up the issue of transnational work. We conclude with a discussion of partnership in relation to other organisational forms for conducting development work, such as networks, clusters and the Triple Helix.

Our aim is thus to highlight important preconditions in the various phases of a development process – i.e. those factors that unite and divide partnerships in the different phases. We would like to point out, however, that the division into different phases is a very approximate one (see Figure 1). In practice, the phases overlap and many of the questions are therefore relevant in several of the phases. Nevertheless, we have chosen to describe working in partnerships on the basis of the different phases as the activities concerned have a more or less prominent role depending on the point that the development work has reached. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

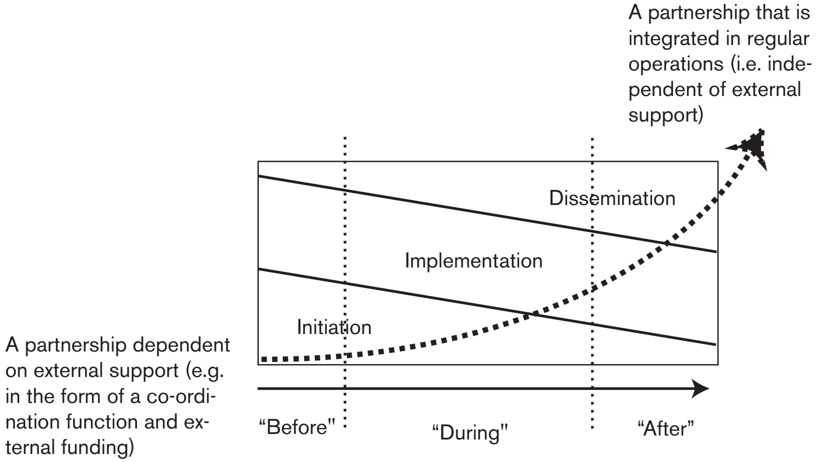

Figure 1. Different phases in a partnership.

In the phase "before" the development work begins, the focus is on the formation of the partnership itself – establishing working structures, formulating aims and objectives and so on. We have chosen to call this type of activity *initiation*. Initiation activities are, of course, most prominent at the introductory stage, but also have an important impact on the work in the "during" and "after" phases (see Figure 1).

In the "during" phase, the focus is on the operational work – testing new methods to achieve the common aims of the development partnership. Implementation work should be conducted throughout the lifecycle of the development partnership, but is most intensive in the "during" phase.

In the final "after" phase, the focus is on impact and dissemination activities. The utilisation and dissemination of the experience and results of the development partnership are in many cases the factors that determine whether the work will lead to long-term effects, i.e., sustainable development. Impact and dissemination work is most prominent in the "after" phase, but work on strategies for effective impact and dissemination should begin already in the first two phases.

The dotted arrow in the figure symbolises the development of a partnership from a situation in which it is dependent on external support in the form of, for example, co-ordination and funding, to the point where its activities can be integrated into regular operations and thus become automatic and independent of external support. This is a process that requires a conscious strategy right from the start of the partnership's work until the end of the support period (e.g. within the framework of the Equal Programme).

Two areas that we have chosen to highlight in all of the phases are *leadership* and *participation*. We wanted to see if there are any differences when it comes to leading the work in the different phases. We also wanted to study the preconditions for participation in the various phases of a development project.

As its starting point, each section (which is based on "before", "during" and "after") takes two case descriptions presented by members of the National Thematic Group. We have chosen descriptions that differ significantly so that we can use the differences to highlight issues of importance to working in partnerships. We would like to emphasise, however, that many of the issues taken up in connection with the case descriptions are not always related to the particular partnership described. On the other hand, all of the questions and issues raised – and the reflections made – are based on the experience of the members of NTG Partnership and the authors of the book. The aim of the experience-based examples presented is to promote learning by providing a basis for reflection and to encourage people to question the idea that there is just one best practice.

The ambition throughout the book is to take into account the perspectives that Equal aims to promote. Combating discrimination in working life and on the labour market plays a central role in the Equal Programme. Equal aims to promote new methods for counteracting discrimination and all forms of inequality in working life and on the labour market. It is a question of making the most of the abilities, competence and development potential of every individual, irrespective of gender, age, ethnic background, sexual orientation or disability. It should be noted that in the book we consistently refer to those who are excluded from working life and the labour market due to discrimination and inequality as *the discriminated* or *the discriminated groups*. It is for these groups that the development partnerships exist. The term target group, on the other hand, relates more to those that the development partnerships aim to influence. This may be the discriminated groups, but perhaps comprises above all those that own structures and can influence conditions on the labour market (employers, the employment agency, the social insurance office etc.).

We wanted to see whether different contents and working structures encourage broader representation and participation in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and class. Networks are sometimes described as a form of organisation for development work that promotes the participation and influence of women. What is the situation regarding partnerships in this respect? Do partnerships stand for something new – in the form, for example, of flexible development partnerships for innovation and learning – or are they simply manifestations of prevailing structures that preserve male dominance? Can development partnerships be innovative working structures that promote participation and influence on the part of groups that traditionally have had limited influence in this type of impact and development organisation? Is the development partnership such a flexible form of organisation that it can be adapted to new participants from a variety of backgrounds and situations? Research has shown that new organisational structures that are built to tear down prevailing power structures, for example gender hierarchies, often adapt over time so that after a while they in fact recreate these structures (see for example Abrahamsson 2000). This adaptation indicates that it is not only the organisational forms that are hierarchical, but that hierarchy is an inherent aspect of our thoughts and actions. How can a partnership work to counteract such an adaptation of its thinking?

Once again, we do not believe in a general model for development that suits everyone, but we do feel that there are solutions that are more or less well founded, discussed and substantiated. We believe that these solutions provide the preconditions required for both innovation and sustainable development.

Background and Starting Points

In the Equal Programme, development must be conducted in the form of a *development partnership*. In our view, learning to work in a development partnership is not an end in itself; it is rather a means – a method or strategy – of achieving "better" development work. By gaining a greater insight into how partnerships work, we believe that development work can achieve greater success. Gaining this insight requires background information on, and an understanding of, what the Equal Programme represents and what partnership is. It is important to place partnership as a strategy in a wider development perspective. In this chapter, we also discuss the importance of social relations and co-operation, among other things as a power factor. The chapter therefore concludes with a section on gender equality and inclusion in partnerships.

The Equal Programme

Equal is the largest diversity programme in the history of the EU and represents an investment of resources to ensure that the abilities, competence and development potential of each individual is utilised on the labour market irrespective of gender, age, ethnic background, sexual orientation or disability.

The programme is funded and administered by the European Social Fund and forms part of the European employment strategy. Equal aims to promote employment and stimulate growth. The main aim is to combat discrimination and exclusion in working life and on the labour market. During the programme period, which extends from 2001 to 2007, a total of approximately SEK 1.5 billion will be invested in Sweden within the framework of the Equal Programme.

The basis for all the work done in the Equal Programme is an organisational form called the *development partnership*. Development partnerships should be used to initiate various activities and operations that, in various ways, seek new methods and test new models with the aim, in the long term, of changing both systems and attitudes. In the first round of the Equal Programme, which began in 2002, 46 development partnerships were started in Sweden. In the second round, which began on November 1, 2004, a further 30 development partnerships were created.

The experience presented in the book is drawn from development partnerships in the first round of the Equal Programme. This book has been produced on the basis of the experience that the participants have gained in their respective development partnerships in this round.

Partnership as a form of organisation for development work

Today, *partnerships* – like networks, clusters, innovation systems and the Triple Helix – are popular as a method or strategy for pursuing development. But what does the term partnership and all these other terms stand for? What type of development do these methods aim to achieve? In what situations are they used, and by who? Do we know whether they work? Are the different terms just in-words?

At the end of the book, we attempt to briefly review the terms and what they stand for, but already at this stage we would like you to think about what partnership is in comparison with the other forms of co-operation mentioned above. Is partnership yet another new term for a traditional working method? Is there a risk that partnership will simply become another new in-word that can be used for all conceivable forms of co-operation in the same way as the term "network"? We have already seen how partnership has become a term that is used in an increasing number of contexts with regard to development work, but with no clear definition.

We have not adopted an exact definition of partnership, but our starting point is that a partnership can be seen as a collection of actors/organisations who join together to address a common issue, where all the partners (using their competence, experience and resources) can contribute to development. A partnership represents a different way of working as compared, for example, to a network. In a partnership, the partners own the issue or task at hand jointly, which requires a commitment from the participants in a way that networks do not. Networks are based on voluntary participation, while partnerships are put together with the aim of performing a task or resolving problems jointly – the partners "own" the task together. In the Equal Programme, the aim is also to have a structural impact, and some of the partners in each partnership thus constitute a part of the structure that the partnership is trying to influence or change This means that a willingness and desire to critically examine one's own activities and operations is an important precondition for the work.

> "The difference between a development partnership and a project is that you don't just want to change the world around you, in a development partnership you also have to be prepared to change yourself" (A co-ordinator in the Equal Programme).

The quotation above indicates the importance of the entire organisation, not just a number of individuals, becoming a committed partner.

Projects are a common organisational form for conducting development work. In Figure 2, we have attempted to illustrate a number of general similarities and differences between partnerships and projects.

As we can see from the figure, partnerships are suitable for more extensive and complex operations, whereas projects are more appropriate for limited assignments where both the means and the objectives are predetermined. The work of a partnership is open in nature in that the formulation of objectives and the testing of methods is a process that must be open as it aims to provide innovative solutions. Another clear difference is the joint responsibility in a partnership, which comprises everything from operation to development (e.g. financial aspects, formulation of objectives, influence, new thinking, dissemination and impact). In a project organisation, however, there is a steering group or project manager with responsibility for ensuring that the assignment is conducted according to plan and in line with the predetermined objectives. Projects and partnerships also differ in terms of their composition. Partnerships represent organisations that are affected by a shared problem, which means that the organisations themselves are responsible for ensuring that changes occur. Responsibility for the changes cannot be shouldered by a single individual but must be assumed by the organisation as a whole. A partnership is thus made up of organisations rather than individuals. In projects, on the other hand, responsibility for completing a certain assignment may often lie with an individual and not necessarily require real responsibility on the part of the entire organisation. Projects can thus include organisations as well as individuals.

Partnerships	**Projects**
Limited operations	Limited task
Own resources	Own resources
Limited time, conclusion date	Limited time, conclusion date
Partners comprising representatives who represent partner organisations, each of whom have declared why they are taking part	*Individuals* who have been appointed by the body or client that has commissioned the project
Bound by a contract/agreement. Decide jointly on working plan*	Governed by the commissioner's (client's) project plan
All partners have joint responsibility on an equal basis. If a development partnership has different projects/sub-projects, it follows therefore that: 1. The development partnership allocates resources and powers, e.g. decides on projects 2. The development partnership follows up the project work 3. The development partnership adjusts and changes project descriptions and resource allocations	A steering group is responsible for decisions, allocation of resources and follow-up
The partnership owns the operations	The steering group reports to the commissioner (client)
* In the Equal programme, consensus is required on important issues, e.g. on documents that are delivered to the ESF Council in the partnership's name (working plans, budgets and reports)	

Figure 2. A comparison between partnerships and projects.

It is important to stress that the figure above is based on a theoretical approach that describes the extremes of the two forms of organisation. There are, of course, projects that are very like partnerships as an organisational form and vice versa. The figure nevertheless presents important factors that are unique to partnerships and that are necessary for partnerships to function as such.

One evaluation (Ledningskonsulterna 2002) has shown that many partnerships have in fact been run more like traditional projects than partnerships. The co-ordinators have acted more or less as project managers and have assumed – or been allocated – a strong role, while the partners in the partnership have been passive. This clearly illustrates how important it is to establish from the start, and to clarify to yourself, the organisation you represent and the other partners, exactly what working in a partnership entails.

The question that should be asked when considering whether a partnership is a suitable organisational form is:

- Is partnership an effective form for solving the problems concerned and for co-operation, or is partnership simply a new trend on the market for organisational development?

The development partnerships in the Equal Programme have a special assignment. They aim to support empowerment and to influence and change structures in order to combat discrimination and exclusion in working life.

- Is it possible to combine such widely differing objectives in the same assignment and the same organisation? What demands are placed on the forms of work and leadership when the objectives are so contradictory?

Development partnerships entail a new and different role for those who participate, even though they may in many cases have experience of working in other groups made up of different partners. It is therefore important right from the start to be aware of the fact that working in a partnership can be seen as a learning process in which there is not only one best solution that applies to all situations, but that the solution is linked to the local context. Working in a development partnership therefore requires an open approach, a considered view of development and an awareness of partnership as a working method and organisational form.

Different ways of looking at development

Is it possible to learn how to *organise* development? Well, that depends what you mean by development. If development is seen as something that can be planned in line with a set timetable, then of course it is possible to learn a technique for this. Most development work – especially the work that is organised in projects – takes place in this form, i.e. with clear objectives, sub-objectives, planning instruments, computerised accounting systems and so on. There are a great number of instruments for analysing, controlling and administering development projects in a clear and predictable way – e.g. Gant charts, SWOT analyses, Logical Framework and planning trees. The technical and administrative orientation of projects gives experts a strong role and thinking is characterised by a planning strategy, i.e., the idea that solutions and innovations can be planned in advance.

In Figure 3, an attempt is made to summarise and isolate some of the characteristics of a planning strategy and of a learning strategy for development. The starting point in the planning strategy is that there is a best solution (best practice) that can be applied in every context. The focus is on achieving concrete results in the short term. Learning is limited and aims to ensure that the right means are selected. Learning here is more in the nature of conducting a follow-up to determine whether the plan has been followed. Dissemination of the experience gained is assumed to be unproblematic and is conducted by means of presenting good examples.

The planning strategy may work excellently under certain conditions, i.e. when the objectives are well known and easy to define. If you want to build a bridge and the various conditions (materials, geotechnical aspects, logistics, meteorology etc.) are known, a planning model will work in a predictable way because sub-objectives can be specified, scheduled and followed up. Decisions can be co-ordinated and systemised along the way.

Development strategies:	*Planning strategy*	*Learning strategy*
Starting point	Best solution	Alternative solutions
Applicability	General	Local, contextual
Aim	Measures-oriented	Sustainable development
Perspective	Short-term	Long-term
Focus	Narrow	Open
Working method	Predetermined	Flexible
Dissemination	Good examples	Learning by example
Learning	Adaptation-oriented	Development-oriented
Reflection	On the means	On both means and objectives
Evaluation	Follow-up	For reflection and learning
Control	Expert-controlled	Participant-controlled

Figure 3. Two development strategies in their pure form.

But in most cases the conditions are not known in advance, it is not even possible to formulate the objectives or the results in advance. Development work – particularly of the innovative type – presupposes that the result is not known in advance and that the means for achieving it are not defined in advance either. Otherwise, we would not be talking about an innovative project!

An increasing proportion of the development work that is conducted in a rapidly-changing society must be open and somewhat unpredictable in nature. Development cannot be planned into existence. Development work must instead be process-oriented, flexibly organised, have a high level of participation and be based on reflection and development-oriented learning – in relation to both means and objectives (see Figure 3). There is not one solution (best practice) that applies to all situations; the solution is tied to the local context – with all that local conditions and local history entail.

We believe that the ideas behind the Equal Programme favour the latter development model. Equal is intended to be innovative – to produce new solutions, change structures, encourage empowerment and so on. The term *development* partnership underlines this.

It is important to stress that the two types of development work presented in Figure 3 are theoretical constructs. They are ideal types, i.e., pure versions of certain ways of thinking about and working with development.

In reality, any development work will consist of both planning and development elements. An Equal partnership must administer and report on its work. A successful development effort must therefore combine planning and development in the right way. It is a question of combining openness with focus, of putting the participants in control while still using experts and of thinking in the long term but still being able to present concrete results here and now.

We therefore reject the idea that there is one *best* practice – a practice that suits all conceivable situations. The idea of one best practice is a pipedream among those that govern hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations. This misguided ambition of the planning strategy should not, on the other hand, prevent us from appreciating the value of various methods used within the framework of a planned development process. Such instruments include, for example, stakeholder analyses or planning trees. Simple techniques can be used, not in a static way but rather as tools for reflection and learning.

Creating a partnership that offers gender equality and inclusion

We have previously admitted that we do not know if or to what extent partnership is a better form of organisation than others for conducting development work. There is criticism of partnership in this respect. For example, one can discuss to what extent partnership is an organisational form that determines whether development work will be successful or not. Perhaps we put too much faith in new forms of organisation as a solution to problems relating to co-operation? We have therefore largely chosen to highlight questions that particularly underline the need for discussions and unity on the content of the work, roles, expectations, results and effects in order to achieve success. Another criticism levelled at partnerships is that they entail the transfer of economic resources and decisions from democratically elected representative bodies to partnerships in which the representatives have not been democratically elected. There is a risk of considerable resources and power being accumulated by organisations that are not transparent or publicly accountable, and that also exclude many actors.

With this in mind, it is important to reflect on to what extent partnerships include or exclude. We have therefore chosen to underline the importance of an inclusive perspective in the work of a partnership in terms of representation, forms of work and concrete operations. One way of addressing the question of exclusion may be to consider who is included in the partnership, who makes the decisions and how, who does the talking and who is listened to. You should also consider the fundamental ideas on which the partnership bases its operations. Transparency, participation and a non-hierarchical organisation are some of the most important factors in preventing partnership from becoming an organisational form only for actors/organisations with an abundance of resources.

There is not much research on partnership as an organisational model and gender equality, but the Emma Resource Centre[2] has conducted research on clusters. This research reveals that the gender perspective is conspicuous by its absence in most regional development work. Definitions of innovation, regional development and clusters are based on the male point of view, which leads to women being excluded from regional development work (Petterson & Saarinen 2004). We believe that these results may also be relevant to partnerships and gender equality.

The labour market in Sweden is gender segregated and many organisations have a patriarchal structure in which men in general have more power than women. How can we prevent partnerships from recreating this unequal structure? Working in a partnership touches on several aspects of gender equality as well as equality in a wider sense. We will focus here on gender equality within partnerships, but also on equality in the relations between a partnership and the group that it is working to include on the labour market. Gender equality is a term that is often associated with demands and documents (e.g. gender equality plans). As a result of the demands for gender equality and the application of a gender perspective, the

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2. The Emma Resource Centre is a competence development centre for regional development from a gender equality perspective. For more information on the Emma Resource Centre see www.emma.se.

concepts are well established at a rhetorical level: We often say that we are *for* gender equality. But what is the situation in reality, in terms of concrete action? When we are asked to specify in what ways we have promoted gender equality or taken the gender perspective into account we often find it difficult to do so: What have we actually done? This shows that there is a gap between rhetoric and action with regard to gender equality. What is it that makes it so difficult to actually specify concrete measures even though so many people are *for* gender equality?

Gender equality is not just about statistics, i.e. about the number of women and men in a partnership. A partnership may include an equal number of women and men, but still have a hierarchy that favours men and disfavours women, or vice versa. Gender equality and the gender perspective are above all about power relations. This means that it is important not only to strive for an even gender distribution, but also to reflect on and identify the power relations that exist in the partnership. This will highlight the fact that gender equality is not simply a women's issue but fundamentally an issue concerning the power relations between women and men. Certain groups (men) benefit from the fact that other groups (women) do not have power. This also enables us to understand why this type of analysis, which challenges the prevailing power relations, arouses a certain amount of resistance. Who wants to lose their position of power?

Co-operation is based on social relations, even in partnerships, and it is therefore important to address the aspect of power in these relations. The point of departure for analysing power relations is to study which individuals have or do not have access to resources, networks, mandates and information. The Emma Resource Centre has identified a number of important factors for analysing power relations within a cluster. These are homo sociality (the fact that men often choose men in an organisational structure), power, harassment, marginalisation, status and the ability to express yourself so that others listen to what you have to say. We believe that these factors may also apply to working in partnerships.

Ensuring gender equality requires analysing the work of a partnership at several levels. The following questions can act as a guide when reflecting on gender equality: [3]

- Are women and men represented in the partnership? At what levels and in what functions? What is the situation regarding representation in formal and informal contexts? Does the information required reach everyone?
- How are the resources (time, money, information, knowledge, contacts) distributed? What resources do the partners bring to the partnership? How are the funds of the partnership distributed and who is involved in making decisions about this? What resources are valued?
- What consequences do representation and resource distribution have for the participation of women and men in the partnership?
- How are the partnerships common problems, aims and objectives defined? What values and norms govern the partnership's work?

An example from one of the partnerships in the Equal Programme that has worked with gender equality demonstrates the resistance that can arise, especially if the aim is to influence the situation in a partner's own organisation. It is important to think about how to deal with such resistance and how to support people who are at risk because they raise issues that may put them in an uncomfortable situation – for example by being exposed to the silent treatment, denigrating comments or even personal attacks.

Gender equality is particularly important with regard to relations between the partnership and those groups who are supposed to benefit from the partnership's work. Experience has shown, for example, that notions about what work is suitable for women and immigrants govern the support that these women or immigrants receive when they apply for jobs that do not fit the norm for the kind of work that they are expected to want to do. Are people encouraged to step outside the norms on a labour market that is segregated in terms of gender and ethnicity, or does encouragement and support fade away in such situations?

3. The questions are based on Gertrud Åström's 3R method; representation, resources, realia.

- What notions govern the activities that the partnership is testing and prioritising?
- Do the women and men involved in the partnership's work have the same opportunities to participate?

Other matters that are important to consider with regard to gender equality are what information is provided and what decisions are made at the formal and informal levels. In an inclusive partnership, an alternative may be to ensure that no issues that should be dealt with formally are taken up in informal contexts unless everyone concerned is involved. At the informal level, it is a question of ensuring that responsibility for the work is assumed in such a way that everyone is comfortable with it. At both the formal and informal levels, for example, language can have an excluding effect.

- What jargon is used? Are terms used that are highly specific to a certain context, profession, training and so on? Is everyone comfortable with the terms and the jargon used?
- Do all the partners listen equally well to everyone in the partnership or do those who express themselves well have a verbal advantage?

The subject of gender equality is not expressly dealt with below, but several of the questions raised can be analysed from a gender perspective. Participation and the attempt to find forms of work that suit everyone are examples of subjects that can create an inclusive partnership. Identifying and changing power relations is not easy. On the contrary, it is often difficult to define power, and few people will admit that they have a position of power. People that others perceive as being powerful may themselves feel that they are powerless. Handling issues like this sometimes requires support and expertise from outside, e.g. a process manager who is not included in the partnership but who can identify power relations and initiate discussions about them. There are, of course, many more questions to be raised and to reflect on, but this is a gateway to a partnership that offers gender equality and inclusion.

Working in Partnership – The First Phase

This section refers to the work of two partnerships – "Diversity in Västernorrland" and "Exchanging Resources". These partnerships were initiated in different ways, which means that they raise different issues that we can consider and discuss. We begin with a brief description of the Diversity in Västernorrland partnership and its working methods in the first phase, the phase "before" development work began.

Following the respective case descriptions, we take up a number of questions that arise directly in connection with the presentations. We then compare the two partnerships with the aim of showing how differently partnerships can work and be organised, without claiming that either method is better or worse than the other. Despite the differences there are common factors, and we have therefore chosen to also discuss a number of general issues on the basis of the previous experience of the participants and the authors.

The section concludes with a summary of the thoughts and feelings of the participants, in retrospect, about the importance of the initiation phase for the following phases of the development work.

The development partnership Diversity in Västernorrland

Diversity in Västernorrland is a development partnership that consists of 14 different partner organisations. The partnership is conducting various trials/sub-projects with the common aim of increasing awareness of the importance of diversity and a more open working life. The aim of Diversity in Västernorrland is to highlight the opportunities that a broad range of diversity offers to individuals, workplaces and the county at large.

The initiative for the partnership was taken in connection with the announcement of the first round of applications for the Equal Programme. A number of stakeholders were invited to the County Administrative Board for an information meeting on this new EU initiative, and the meeting resulted in the formation of a working group. As the level of ambition and the workload of the group increased, the partners involved decided to jointly fund the employment of a person full time. This person provided important support in the process leading up to the submission of the application. The working group was expanded and many of the participants later became participants in the development partnership itself.

The initiation work primarily took the form of a widespread invitation and the provision of information on the Equal Programme to a number of different regional actors with the aim of accumulating all the ideas that these actors had. The only limitation was that the ideas had to be linked to the theme of diversity. The working group issued an invitation to an open ideas seminar, which aroused a lot of interest. Around 100 regional actors/organisations were contacted and approximately 50 of them attended the seminar. The aim of the seminar was to see what ideas "people around the county" had on the subject of diversity in Västernorrland.

In parallel with this "ideas search", regional work was also conducted to strengthen the county's vision as expressed in the slogan "Västernorrland offers opportunity and diversity". The ideas seminar thus became part of the work on this vision, which meant that the initiation of the Equal partnership received the support of the County Governor, among others. This later turned out to be important in that it added legitimacy to the efforts of the group.

After a lot of work, the group was left with seven ideas which later resulted in the six sub-projects that the development partnership decided to work with. The entire process – from the launch of the Equal Programme until the six sub-projects were selected, the partners were "recruited" and the application was written – took approximately one year. It should be noted that no funding was allocated until the processing of all the ideas was finalised.

This first presentation points to the following central questions regarding the recruitment of participants:

• Who should be included? How can representation be created that enables both structural impact and empowerment, i.e. with representatives with a mandate to change the relevant structures but also with representative who are close to, or have experience of, the problems that the partnership will work with?

Experience has shown that it is extremely difficult to gain access to existing structures and to push through changes from outside. One critical success factor may therefore be to include representatives with legitimacy and experience in the partnership in order to open the door to structural impact. It is also important that the representatives are willing and prepared to accept change, otherwise there is a risk that existing structures will be preserved.

• How can we prevent the establishment from taking over supervision of events and activities? How important was it, for example, that the County Governor was involved to add legitimacy to the work?

• How can representatives of discriminated groups gain access to these contexts if previous positions and contacts govern recruitment to the partnership? How can the participation of under-represented groups be promoted?

• How can we plan for the dissemination and impact of the results before the partnership itself is actually put together? Should the selection of partnership participants be governed by their ability to promote dissemination and impact or by their knowledge and position/network of contacts?

In Diversity in Västernorrland, as in most of the partnerships in the Equal Programme, funding was not guaranteed until the idea behind the partnership was formulated and funds were granted by the Equal Programme.

• Is there a risk that the initiation process will be pushed along too quickly if funding is not guaranteed for one or several individuals that can work with initiation?

• Who should provide the “risk capital” for the initiation work? Is it possible to secure a motivation and willingness to continue with the work by requiring financial or other support from the future partners at an early stage?

In order to illustrate how *differently* the initiation of a partnership can be conducted, we will now describe another partnership, “Exchanging Resources”, by briefly presenting the partnership and the methods it adopted in the first phase, i.e. “before” the development work itself began.

The development partnership Exchanging Resources

The mission of the development partnership Exchanging Resources is to help recent immigrants and refugees with a residence permit to become self-supporting more quickly through jobs or training. The partnership, which has seven partners, is developing a model for workplace induction. The arenas involved are pre-schools, schools and after-school recreation centres. The model is being developed in co-operation with six different schools who, together with the partnership, are working with value issues relating to gender equality, diversity and participation.

The idea for the development partnership Exchanging Resources arose when some of the future partners, on the basis of their particular experience and everyday work, saw a need for a workplace induction programme for recent arrivals. The aim was to enable recent arrivals to enter working life and participate in the life of the community more quickly than is the case today. The co-ordinator, who was involved during the initiation phase, had previously worked in several projects funded by the Objective 3-programme where the target groups were the long-term unemployed and recent immigrants. The idea of a partnership was discussed with a number of actors who had knowledge and experience of the difficulties that refugees and recent immigrants face in entering the labour market. Their experience was that many projects lead to the identification of a need, the implementation of measures and, in the best case, an evaluation. The difficulty has been, however, to implement the processes that have led to good results or to change negative processes in the regular operations of the project participants. This time they wanted to investigate whether a development partnership as an organisational form could be more successful than traditional steering groups with regard to mainstreaming – i.e., the integration of results. An important precondition was that the funding of a partnership is ensured for a much longer period of time than for a normal project with a limited time schedule. The Exchanging Resources partnership thus hoped that it would gain more time to work with the mainstreaming of the results of the model it developed.

The actual initiation work began as late as two weeks before the application was due to be finalised. At this stage, actors who could conceivably be interested in developing a model that would shorten the period of time that elapses between receiving a residence permit and finding a job for refugees and recent immigrants were mobilised. As the actors all had experience of the problems in this area – but in different ways due to their different backgrounds – most of them were already part of a well-developed network. They also felt that they already had a good idea of who could or should be fitting members of the development partnership. A survey and an analysis were conducted before the partnership was put together. An important factor in this context was that great importance was attached to avoiding the formation of a partnership consisting of individuals who would spend their time sitting in meetings. Instead, the player wanted a partnership that really could contribute to the implementation and mainstreaming of the work. Some of the actors that, following the analysis, were identified as suitable partners decided that they did not want to take part. These became strategically important later – but not essential – in the development and mainstreaming of the model's results, and several meetings and the transfer of knowledge have taken place with those who "declined". Six partners eventually decided to form the development partnership Exchanging Resources.

In this case, there was a clear idea about what the partnership should work with and this formed the core of the application. The initial idea was, however, subsequently developed further by the partnership. The development work conducted by Exchanging Resources raised the following questions:

- Is there a risk that a partnership will become a “standard” project when the development work is initiated by a few “driven” individuals in this way?
- Do the partners, especially the partners that joined following the initial discussions, really feel that they are the owners of the development work?

The people behind Exchanging Resources were well aware from the start of who would make suitable partners. Some actors/organisations were self-evident, and a network of contacts was already in place. Nevertheless, some of the actors that it was felt should belong to the partnership decided not to take part.

- What does it entail that strategically important actors decide not to join the partnership? Are there alternative ways of ensuring their participation? Can these actors be involved in other ways, without becoming partners, and if so what are the consequences of this?
- What does searching for suitable partners in existing networks entail? Is there a risk that existing structures will be preserved? How can we make it possible for “new” actors to enter these existing networks?

Exchanging Resources chose to conduct a thorough survey and analysis before the partnership was put together. Each organisation and participant was asked to present their roles, expectations and motives for taking part. In retrospect, this is now seen as a critical success factor.

- How is it possible to create trust and openness in a group where all the participants do not know each other? Can the survey and the analysis help to reveal hidden agendas?
- Should the partnership set common objectives or should objectives be formulated in the form of expected results for each members of the partnership? Which objectives should be governing if there is a conflict between the common and the individual objectives?

- Can roles and preconditions be worked out even if the work of the partnership has already begun, or is this something that has to be done from the start? Is it at all possible, in fact, to conduct an analysis at an early stage of a process-oriented project or programme that will clearly establish who the partners should be and what roles they should play?

If surveys, analyses and expectations are regularly followed up, these can act as process support tools, rather than as methods, in a planning strategy so that working methods and roles can be established at an early stage. If a partnership follows up conditions and any changes on an ongoing basis, it will be possible to see how the individual partners view their own participation and that of the other partners during the course of the work. This will make it possible to combine planning with development and create openness and flexibility in terms of organisation, working methods and expectations.

One of the most important critical success factors, according to one of the partners of Exchanging Resources, is that that there has been a range of experience within the partnership. There has, on the one hand, been experience of working flexibly, i.e. less "administratively" and more network-oriented, while on the other hand there have been partners with a knowledge and understanding of how the administrative system works.

A comparison between the partnerships

There are clear differences in the way in which the two partnerships were initiated. We will now highlight some of these differences and discuss them.

Both partnerships have developed over a period of time. They started in a certain way but have changed in the course of implementation. The composition of the partnerships has also changed somewhat. In one of the partnerships a partner opted out entirely and a new partner joined, while in the other there has been a change of level (from the regional to the central level). It is therefore natural to ask:

- How can the partnerships be made flexible? Can partners be changed and replaced over time? Should this be planned for right from the start?

The replacement of partners may, if the partners who are replaced provided part of the co-funding, have consequences for the total budget of the partnership, which in turn can lead to changes in planned activities or the manning of the partnership. A good tip is therefore to begin to plan for the fact that partners may leave or join the partnership right from the start.

The initiation of the two development partnerships differs widely. In the first case, the idea for the partnership developed among a number of actors/organisations without a clearly formulated objective. In the second case, there was a clear idea that quickly attracted support. This idea was concretised in the form of clearly-stated objectives and expected results. An important question that arises as a result of this difference in the initiation process is:

- How important is it to have clear objectives and visions for the development work? Must there be a shared vision that unites the participants from the start, or can the vision develop during the course of the work?
- Is it a good method to start with what is already there and collect ideas using a "funnel model", as in the first example? Isn't there then a risk that rehashed ideas or outworn notions will be brought to the table?
- What are the relations between the partners like in these two different types of development partnership? Is it especially important to be very specific about what is required from each individual partner when the objectives are open or vaguely formulated?

It is the general experience of those involved that a lot of time is required in the initiation phase to clarify objectives, expectations and roles. Different parts of the work need to be formalised to a different extent; in some cases it may be a good idea for the partners to sign formal agreements. The most important thing, however, is for the participants to develop a common understanding of the problem. A problem must be set before it can be solved![4]

4. Donald Schön, who conducts research on learning, talks about *problem-setting* in this context.

The role of the co-ordinator

Both of the development partnerships emphasise the importance of real support and competent co-ordination in the initiation phase. A partnership, unlike a project, is based on partners who assume a joint responsibility and the co-ordinator, unlike a project manager, does not drive the development work alone but instead co-ordinates the joint efforts of the partners. This places great demands on the partners and their understanding of the commitment that membership of a partnership entails, but also on the co-ordinator's own attitude and approach to the task.

Several examples from partnerships in the Equal Programme reveal that the unfamiliarity of the situation is often reflected in a limited awareness of the joint assumption of responsibility. It is not unusual for the co-ordinator to gradually begin to act like a project manager and to shoulder the responsibility that the partners should really take for driving the work forward. It also happens that co-ordinators simply wait for initiatives to co-ordinate, which can lead to the work coming to a standstill and frustration arising and prevailing until the partners understand their commitment and act jointly. This latter case requires a co-ordinator who is not afraid of becoming unpopular when frustration arises because the work has come to a halt and who also has the courage to wait for the partners to realise what their responsibilities are.

- How can the partners be made to understand that they share a joint responsibility? How "driving" should a co-ordinator be when the partners fail to take any initiatives?
- What does the role of co-ordinator entail? How can the co-ordinator balance the need for planning, focus and concrete results with openness, participant control and long-term effects?
- What competence and experience does a co-ordinator require? Should it be a person who is really committed to the issue and the target group concerned, has experience of project management and is competent to support development processes? Is it possible to combine these different roles or can the needs be met, for example, by sharing the responsibility between several co-ordinators?

- Can it be an advantage to have different co-ordinators for different phases of the work?

The questions above on a "driving" co-ordinator and shared responsibility are somewhat double-edged. The very idea of a partnership is that leadership and responsibility should be shared as the partners own the task concerned together. The co-ordinator function differs in many ways from a traditional leadership role. A partnership is more in need of a person who co-ordinates the work and takes responsibility for the administration that an Equal partnership requires than of a person who drives and controls the activities and makes decisions.

Another question relating to the co-ordinator function in the initiation phase concerns how recruitment is carried out.

Project management has become a profession for many development managers. They primarily take a job as a project manager to support themselves and they perhaps sometimes lack the commitment and enthusiasm that is required to run innovative projects. Some may see their participation in an Equal partnership as a step up the career ladder or as an opportunity to "play the tourist around Europe", rather than as a demanding job for a discriminated group under uncertain terms and conditions. Other experience shows that people who play an active role in the initiation work sometimes also appoint themselves as co-ordinator.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the initiator and co-ordinator of the partnership being one and the same person?
- How can we avoid recruitment from a circle of friends or acquaintances? How can we avoid a situation in which we are expected to take over someone who has become "surplus to requirements" when, for example, there is a shortage of work in his or her home organisation, or to take on someone who the home organisation simply wants to get rid of?

A final question concerning the role of the co-ordinator in the initiation phase is how to avoid vulnerability in a partnership where one person or a few people have played a particularly active role in the initiation work.

- What happens if the co-ordinator resigns? Can the consequences of this be mitigated by, for example, sharing the responsibilities of the co-ordinator and sharing responsibility in the partnership for building a broader base and overlapping areas of responsibility?

There is a risk that the work of a partnership will become highly vulnerable if the partners fail to meet their commitments in terms of participation, as the partnership will then rest on the shoulders of one person – the co-ordinator. This could put the co-ordinator in a very exposed position in which he or she has a great deal of responsibility but a limited official mandate.

Composition and participation

The participation of the partners, but above all their joint responsibility, forms the core of the work of a partnership and is the factor that most clearly distinguishes a partnership from other forms of organisation for conducting development. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the partners that are needed to work with the joint tasks of the partnership are represented, and that the partnership is organised and works in a way that provides for the participation and shared responsibility of the partners.

- Are all the partners involved in solving the problem or fulfilling the objective that the partnership has set?
- What knowledge and experience does the partnership require? Is knowledge and experience of the common issue of the partnership – in Equal's case discrimination and exclusion on the labour market – available? Is there sufficient knowledge of development work and cross-sector co-operation, administration etc? How do the partners complement each other?

As we have said, a partnership is based on representation, i.e., the participation of established actors and organisations. This means that there is a risk that the discriminated groups that the Equal Programme is trying to help will find it difficult to make their voices heard, especially in the initiation phase.

Discussing who actually makes up the partnership's target group may seem trivial, but experience shows that this is not always self-evident. In the Equal Programme, the words that best describe the relation between the development partnership and the group that it is working for/with/on behalf of has been discussed. Sometimes, for example the terms "target groups" and the "target groups' target group" are used, sometimes people talk about the "target group" *and* the "clients". The interesting thing about this discussion is exactly how the partnership relates to the discriminated group or groups that it has chosen to work *for*.

- Is it a question of acting with or for a group? Is it because their experience can be used to identify and change discriminating structures, or is it because they are seen as weak groups that need to be strengthened by means of participation?

Irrespective of the term used or the attitude that prevails, it is important that there is consensus about this, otherwise there is a risk that the aim of the partnership will be unclear. It should be clarified, therefore, exactly who the partnership is working for and who – or rather what – should be changed. This gives rise to the following questions:

- Is the participation of the discriminated groups necessary in all development work? If so, how can the participation of those that the partnership is intended to benefit be provided for already in the initiation phase – e.g. the unemployed, refugees, people on the long-term sick list?

One example that demonstrated that it is possible to create participation is a partnership that was initiated among active partners. This case involved local community associations and groups of Sami. Representatives of the discriminated groups were involved already in the initiation phase and were able to influence the content and structure of the partnership's work, which meant that they subsequently assumed responsibility and participated actively rather than being a passive target group. The prerequisite for this was that they participated in the planning and design of the activities at an early stage. Organising for participation is thus a question of both representation and forms of work.

- How can working structures and methods be created that suit and include everyone, irrespective of previous experience and contacts?

Resistance to formal representation in combination with a lack of clear aims are often the reasons why companies are sparsely represented in partnerships. Experience shows that representatives of business and industry above all become involved in activities that can provide direct benefits – ultimately in terms of increased profits, not in activities with more unpredictable, and perhaps less measurable, results.

- How can companies be involved in partnerships? Must the objectives be made clearer? Should the working structures be made more efficient and less labour intensive?
- What different demands are made within a partnership when some of the partners are running direct income-financed operations while others are publicly financed or running non-profit operations?
- On whose terms are the activities designed when the partners come from such different backgrounds? Is it possible to create a meeting of equals in the partnership?

It is not only business and industry that is poorly represented in the existing partnerships. Politicians, trade union representatives and people from the mass media are also scarce on the ground.

- Why is it that business and industry, the political sphere, the trade unions and the mass media are so seldom represented in the partnerships? What can be done to broaden the participation of these groups in the partnerships?

We have strongly emphasised the importance of having the right partners in the partnership in order to make it possible to work effectively on the common issue for the partnership. Selecting partners and establishing a working method and an organisation that promotes shared responsibility and participation are probably the most important elements of the initiation phase. However, there are still a number of other important questions to be considered.

Other questions to discuss

The literature on development work is based on *rational* models, i.e. on the idea that there are sensible reasons for the participants and their organisations to participate. It is assumed that the participants have noble and unselfish motives for their participation.

Research and experience – not least from recent events concerning the boards of several large companies – reveal that this is a one-sided and incorrect view, indeed almost naive. We have previously referred to the issue of hidden motives (agendas) and conflicting aims with regard to participation in a partnership. Here we would like to discuss a number of other consequences of this.

Any unawareness of the hidden motives of the actors and organisations involved means that the development work concerned will be based on unrealistic assumptions and will therefore be vulnerable and unpredictable. In the course of our discussions, it has emerged that organisations often have financial motives for taking part. The funds from the Equal Programme help them to cover their fixed costs. The time set aside for the work in the partnership is not used to the full but is partly spent on working with the normal operations of the organisation. Another motive may be that certain issues are "in fashion", and there is therefore pressure on the organisation to work with these issues. Such pressure can lead to a situation in which the organisation's involvement has more to do with its desire to cross the issues off a "to-do list" than with a genuine interest in, or an ambition to test, new ideas.

It is particularly important to consider and discuss the following questions when initiating a development partnership:

- How do the preconditions, motives and working methods for participation in a development partnership differ between partners from the private, public and non-profit sectors?
- Is there consensus on the terms and definitions that are central to the development work? Is there consensus on the forms of work?

It has proved to be important to clarify definitions and various central terms and concepts. Rhetorical consensus is not enough in this context, concerted action is also required. In other words, there must also be consensus on the terms when the time comes to take concrete action. This is when the differences between the different partners become visible and when the problems come to the surface. This applies both within the partnership and when the partners' home organisations are required to demonstrate their support and backing.

- How are situations handled when the partners' own organisations want to move in one direction while the partnership wants to move in another, for example when the head of a home organisation has a different set of priorities from the partnership? How can we resolve situations in which partnership participants are torn between the work of their partnership and their everyday work in their home organisation?

As the regulations of the ESF Council stipulate that budgets must be planned in advance, i.e. before the work of the partnership actually starts, there is a great risk that the planned budget will not be in line with subsequent requirements. The expectations of sub-projects/subordinate operations are often based on the adopted budget. If it turns out that the budget is incorrect in relation to the activities that are actually started, it may be difficult to deal with the expectations of the sub-projects if funds have to be redistributed. Disappointment and frustration can easily arise as a result of this.

- By signing agreements in advance, can we redistribute the funding if the partnership and its activities change? Whose responsibility is it to allocate the funding?

Experience has shown that difficulties arise when co-funding is partly linked to services, which among other things entails strict demands for time reporting. There is a risk that extensive discussions on co-funding and administration will drain energy and attention away from the real aims of the partnership's work. The activities and operations of the partnership should govern the allocation of the funds rather than a fairness principle under which resources are allocated equally, for example to each sub-project.

A piece of advice given by several of the co-ordinators of Equal Programme partnerships was that you should strive to keep as large a part of the partnership's total funding as possible open for as long as you can. This will provide a flexible budget, which means that funds can be used as and when activities or needs arise. The co-ordinators thus issued a warning about ending up in a situation in which too large a part of the funding is tied up in fixed costs that can only be reduced by making staff cuts.

Experience from one of the ongoing Equal partnerships reveals significant differences in the time required for sub-projects to get off the ground. The time required to build up an organisation, fund development work, find premises and personnel and so on varies. These differences demand a great deal of co-operation, but also demand transparency and an insight into each other's work as the joint funding is dependent on participation in the individual sub-projects.

- How is the concept of fairness, i.e., the view that all the sub-projects should receive an equal share of the joint resources, dealt with in such a partnership?

Another problem that arises when a development partnership is largely co-funded by grants that support activities for, for example, the unemployed or people on rehabilitation programmes, is that that this co-funding decreases as more and more of the objectives are achieved, i.e. as the individuals concerned return to work or their grants cease for other reasons.

> "In the future we will demand co-funding in hard cash" (Project Co-ordinator).

In most development partnerships, the financial aspects are governed by written agreements between the parties. These agreements traditionally cover the legal undertakings and responsibilities of the partners. Several co-ordinators have pointed out, however, that the agreements could be developed so that they could also be used as process tools in the course of the development work.

- How can written agreements help to avoid/resolve misunderstandings and uncertainties, without this leading to a situation in which the partners feel that their good judgement is being questioned?
- Can written agreements contribute to consensus regarding the partners' joint responsibility for the development work, an open attitude and a willingness to be flexible?

Even though written agreements may seem formal and unnecessarily complicated, they have often proved to be critical success factors. Something that "everyone" seemed to agree on yesterday can lead to disagreements tomorrow. It is often the case that disagreements or conflicts first arise when the time comes to take concrete action. Putting the original agreement in writing and referring back to it may therefore be a constructive way of moving the work along. The writing process itself may be a way of creating consensus, as the partners then really have to agree on what is actually written down.

Summarising reflections on the phase "before" the start of development work

When the partnerships look back to what caused the greatest difficulties or problems in the course of their development work, they often refer to the lack of consensus on terms and concepts, as well as on working methods and roles. Before we leave the "before" phase, we would therefore like to highlight some issues that should be considered and regularly reconsidered in development partnerships:

- What is actually meant by the term partnership? Is there consensus in the development partnership about what partnership is?
- What distinguishes partnerships from networks, traditional projects and other forms of organisation for development work?
- How does being a partner differ from being a member of a project group or network?
- What does my role as a partner entail, and what is expected of me and the other partners?

A partnership is a dynamic process, and if a partnership is to lead to long-term changes it is important to utilise the ability of the partners to learn together – from one another. It is equally important that the partners introduce the lessons learned to their home organisations – that there is a willingness to learn together "at home". Once all of the partners are in agreement, we believe that an important foundation stone has been laid for a successful partnership. But a lot of work remains to be done. In the next section of the book, we deal with "implementation".

Working in Partnerships – The Second Phase

This section is primarily based on the experience of two partnerships – "People" and "Rural Renewal". These partnerships have very similar structures in that they both comprise several separate "workshops" at different locations throughout Sweden. They are organised in the form of subprojects or local development partnerships working under an overall national partnership. There are both similarities and differences in the methods used by the two partnerships in the implementation phase.

We begin this section with brief descriptions of the two partnerships and their work and in connection with these presentations we ask a number of questions that exemplify dilemmas and difficulties. We then compare the two partnerships. Finally, we address the role of the co-ordinator and participation, where we also refer to the experience of other partnerships. As a contrast to People and Rural Renewal, we also briefly describe a much smaller and in several respects more homogeneouns development partnership – "The Power of Words".

The development partnership People

The People partnership is based on co-operation between three different regions, so-called nodes (Söderhamn, Lindesberg and the GGVV region).[5] Workplace learning is a common theme for the partnership and a common element of its work. The idea when the partnership was formed was that experience on learning at the workplace would be exchanged between the three regions. In order to promote joint learning, R&D support was linked

5. The GGVV region comprises Gislaved, Gnosjö, Vaggeryd and Värnamo.

to the partnership. The R&D centre APeL thus became a fourth partner with responsibility for co-ordination and research.

Initially, the People partnership was described as a “driving force” for the development of new methods for adult education and training. The aim was to run a small-scale trial with the workplace as a natural arena for learning. The initiative for the partnership was taken by the National Institute for Working Life which had previously worked with the three nodes separately and realised that they could gain by co-operating with each other.

The development partnership People consists of a complex organisation that works on different levels – locally, nationally and transnationally. The operational work takes place at the local level, while strategic decisions are made at the national level. The thematic work is organised at the transnational level. The development partnership includes a research and development element where the research is conducted interactively, i.e. as a support for the development work.[6]

A complex organisation requires clarity, co-ordination and well-developed co-operation. The contact at the ESF Council warned from the start that it would be difficult to hold the operations of the partnership together. The people in charge chose not to heed this warning but highlighted instead the independence of the three regions and the local base, while toning down the demands for co-operation, joint responsibility and co-ordination.

The aim of the development work was agreed at a strategic level during the initiation phase, but without actively involving those at the operational level. It soon emerged that there was a “gap” between the strategic and operational levels – for example when the time came to start up the local “workshops”. A strong focus on the local activities made it difficult to find common issues on which to co-operate nationally. At the same time as the

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6. An interactive research effort entails conducting research together *with* those concerned, not *on*, *for* or *on behalf of* them. In the joint work done by researchers and practitioners, simultaneous and mutual learning takes place for both the researcher and the participant. The starting point is to create equitable and mutual relations, but also to provide theoretically insightful and practically applicable knowledge.

three nodes became increasingly autonomous, it emerged that the strategic level could not solve the problems that arose locally. The partners were more firmly rooted in their respective nodes than in a common partnership.

The strong local and regional focus led to the formation of three local partnerships with different points of departure and different target groups. In Söderhamn, it was decided first and foremost to try to get business and industry, i.e., private companies, involved. The idea was to develop a model for trainee operations as a gateway to the labour market for people with a limited educational background, at the same time as people who were already employed could be given the time and opportunity to undergo further training.

In Lindesberg, the work was based on a group of people on the long-term sick list. Empowerment was a clear central aim here, i.e., the ambition to strengthen the self-confidence and increase the resources of the individuals concerned. In this case, the concept of workplace learning was no longer relevant, as this group did not have access to the workplace.

In the GGVV region, one of the major industrial plants in the region was due to be closed down. The aim of the People partnership here was to use a Swedish language training programme to connect immigrants who had been made redundant with small companies in the region that found it difficult to recruit skilled labour. Problems arose when it turned out that the immigrants never became unemployed. They were quickly recruited by new employers without the support of the People partnership. Eventually, however, other exclusion mechanisms were identified that were considered important for the work of this node, but by the time this work started several months of the period for which the partnership had support from the Equal Programme had already passed.

After a while, however, the work in all of the three nodes got underway. The activities in the three nodes differed however, both in terms of content and forms of work. This meant that People became in effect three local development partnerships and the link to a common national partnership was unclear. It also emerged after a while that one of the local co-ordinators did not see himself as a co-ordinator at all but as a sub-project manager. He based this view on a passage in the Equal application, a passage that could unfortunately be interpreted in different ways.

This presentation of the People partnership raises a number of questions on how to organise for co-operation when the aim is to achieve results and long-term effects.

- How can we formulate and concretise the common core in a development partnership that risks becoming their different operations, each of which addresses different problems? Is there any point in having a joint partnership at all when the common core is so unclear.

In the People partnership, the aim was to hold together three autonomous operations, with the result that it became difficult to get anyone to take overall responsibility.

- What can a development partnership do when the local partnerships/sub-projects do not want any central co-ordination and the local co-ordinators/project managers also have different views on the common aims and forms of work?
- Would the joint benefit have become clearer if representatives of the discriminated groups as well as teachers and mentors had been able to meet to exchange experience on learning at the workplace? Could the value of the development work and the concrete results then have governed the work to a greater extent, with a consistent grassroots perspective as a result?

A lack of co-ordination in development work is often related to the lack of a clear assumption of responsibility. The aim of a partnership organisation is precisely this – to establish a clear responsibility for the development work and the results achieved. In the People partnership, there was a lack of active ownership among the organisations behind the application.

- What does active ownership in a development partnership entail? How should the partners demonstrate their interest during the implementation phase in order to ensure that the partnership is under control and moves forward?

- Can research be a part of the process in order to resolve problems of the type mentioned above?

In this case, the research concerned was interactive, i.e., the researchers were not responsible for *driving* development forward but for supporting development – among other things by highlighting and critically examining events in a close dialogue with those concerned. There are, however, a number of problems associated with using research as process support: What happens if a researcher delivers criticism that the partners are not willing to address or accept? In the People partnership, initial criticism from one of the researchers concerning the lack of representation of the discriminated groups upset and irritated some of the participants. As a result, research was subsequently limited to supporting what was already happening within certain set frameworks, instead of applying a critical approach with the aim of providing completely new ideas and approaches for the activities and organisation of the partnership.[7]

- What role should research play in the work of the partnership? Should research be critical and questioning, even with regard to the work or attitudes of individuals?

Research can be used in different ways. In simple terms, research can either be used as an evaluation tool to follow-up predetermined objectives and results (within the framework of a planning strategy), or as a support for reflection and learning (within the framework of a learning strategy).

Taken as a whole, the example of the People partnership illustrates how important it is to clearly concretise what the "glue" that holds the partnership together consists of, and to clearly establish how everyone involved views their role as a partner or co-ordinator. Do they see themselves as be-

7. See for example Argyris and Schön (1996) who write about single-loop and double-loop learning. They point to the difference between learning to do what you already do better (single-loop) and thinking in new ways (double-loop).

longing to a development partnership or to a series of sub-projects? It may perhaps not be necessary for everyone to agree on everything, but everyone should at least be able to say how they view their roles and why they are taking part. What do the partners stand to win or lose by co-operating?

Establishing what the "glue" actually is and getting all the partners to accept this as an important factor is decisive to the success of a partnership. It is a precondition for enabling participants to lift their focus and attention from the level of their own sub-projects to the level of a joint development partnership that, in addition, has a transnational element.

In the People development partnership, problems arose because the operations were run at three different locations with an unclear common denominator. A situation developed in which the activities were in practice run as three rather autonomous local operations.

For the purposes of comparison – and in order to broaden the perspective – we will now describe Rural Renewal development partnership, which at first sight may appear to be even more complex and more geographically widespread. How have the problems mentioned above been handled in this partnership?

The development partnership Rural Renewal

The initiative for this partnership was taken in order to assimilate and utilise the experience gained in various Adapt and Leader projects in Norrland. The intention was to build further upon the networks that were established in the course of these projects.

The overall aim of Rural Renewal is to give people the opportunity to continue living, and to earn a living, in the areas concerned.

The development partnership chose to work in the four northernmost counties of Sweden – Jämtland, Västernorrland, Västerbotten and Norrbotten. The target group consists of public authorities and organisations with responsibility for local issues and with the ability to influence the local labour market.

The partnership became a large organisation involving many different actors/organisations. In total there are 11 sub-projects in three theme areas.

Figure 4 presents the partnership's operations and indicates the complexity that the partnership has to handle.

The operations came to comprise a variety of issues and a number of initiatives. These include supporting local initiatives to develop and implement new ideas and activities with the aim of making it possible for young people to stay in the area, as well as activities for people who risk exclusion (e.g. Sami).

The partnership thus chose to organise its development work primarily in the form of sub-projects. According to the co-ordinator, this led to much greater clarity regarding ownership than would have been the case if the partnership had decided to organise its work using local development partnerships. As a result, the development partnership became the undisputed owner of the issues and thus the "client" for the work of the various sub-projects.

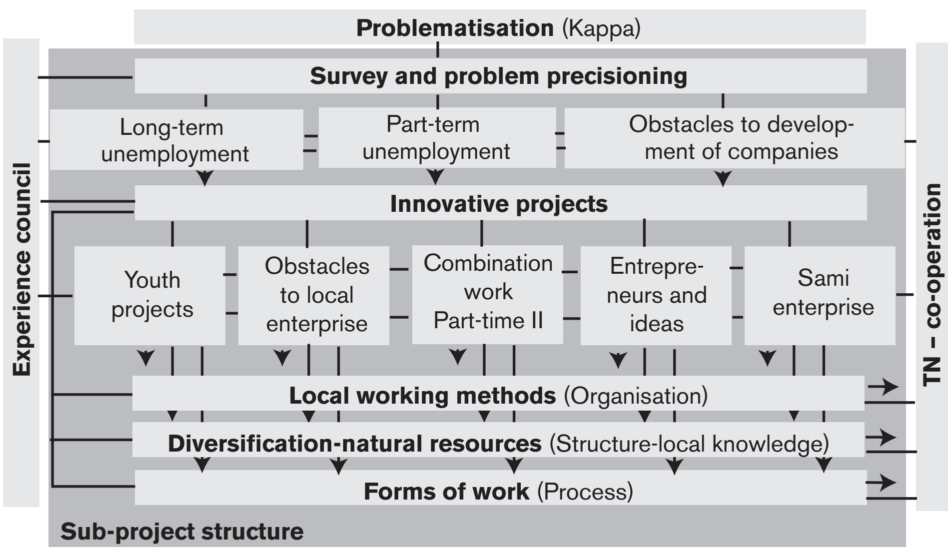

Figure 4. Outline of the complex operations of the The Renewal of Sparsely-populated Rural Areas development partnership.

The development partnership consists of 12 operative partners and four strategic partners. The latter were not involved from the start, however, but were included later when it was realised that there was a need to expand the partnership in order to make it possible to influence important decisions. Five sub-groups were also formed on the basis of both a thematic and geographical division. These five groups are: the Co-ordination Group in Norrbotten, the Co-ordination Group in Västernorrland, Sami Enterprise, Gender Equality and the Thematic Group for Issues Relating to Young People. An Experience Council made up of researchers and experts from four different universities was set up to support the development and analysis work. This Council provides support and advice to the sub-projects and to their target groups. The idea is that the members of the Council should use their expertise to define problems but also possible solutions in order to bring about changes in society.

- Could an experience council constitute a support to your development partnership, for example by clarifying the overall picture of the partnership's operations?
- Can experience councils and research environments be included as partners, or should they be seen as independent from the other members of the partnership? How critical is an experience council permitted to be, or dare it be, when it is funded by the partnership?

To hold together the development partnership and all the activities that take place, the partnership holds three to four partnership meetings per year. The meetings discuss issues such as finance and administration. Reports are also presented on all of the sub-projects and on the transnational work. All the partnership meetings are held from lunchtime to lunchtime with an overnight stay. According to the co-ordinator, this way of organising the meetings is one of the success factors that explains why the relations between the partners have been so good, as it has allowed time for them to meet socially too. In addition to the partnership meetings, there are also three to four meetings per year for each of the sub-groups.

This presentation of Rural Renewal raises a number of issues:

- How can unity between the partners be created and what holds the work together in a large partnership like this? How important is the shared vision concerning Rural Renewal in comparison with the concrete results? Can unity be created in a large partnership without a strong and driving co-ordinator?
- How sustainable is a complicated and demanding collaboration like this? What are the chances of such a collaboration surviving when funding for co-operation and co-ordination are no longer available? Who will then shoulder responsibility for upholding and administering the work?
- In a partnership that is as large and geographically widespread as this, how can a cohesive and holistic structure be created that brings together the results of the various activities of the sub-projects, and how can joint learning be ensured?
- How can all the partners gain an overall view of the work of the partnership so that they feel that they are active owners?

The description of Rural Renewal and the issues we have addressed demonstrate the complexity of a partnership that has such an extensive organisation and so many local sub-projects spread over such a wide geographical area. Something that we have not yet discussed, but which the co-ordinator of the partnership feels is a prerequisite for the partnership being able to work effectively, is the importance of an effective flow of information and communication. He believes that this has been the key in keeping the partnership glued together.

A comparison between the partnerships

There are great similarities between the two partnerships, but also important differences. The People partnership is based on co-operation between actors/organisations that have never co-operated before, while Rural Renewal involves several partners who have previously worked together in projects with similar aims.

• Has previous co-operation made it easier for Rural Renewal to find the common denominator for the various sub-projects?

The geographical situation together with the cultural affinity made it easier to create a common identity and ambition in Rural Renewal. In People, the concept of workplace learning formed the basis for co-operation. It emerged, however, that this was too vague and indistinct a basis for creating a shared identity and sense of unity in the partnership as a whole. A shared idea may seem clear and distinct in the initiation phase, but is put to the test later when the time comes to take concrete action.

• What should the relationship be between a partnership's common idea and the activities of the sub-projects? Can the activities of the sub-projects and the work of the partnership be seen as parallel processes that "meet" for the first time in the dissemination phase, or must the common idea and the activities of the sub-projects be integrated from the start?

In People, a local development partnership was organised in each node, which made the nodes more or less independent. In Rural Renewal on the other hand, the work was organised in sub-projects. This made the partnership the clear owner of the development work and the client for the work of the projects.

• Would the ownership of People have become clearer, and would its partners have assumed a greater responsibility, if the partnership had dropped the local development partnerships? Would, in this case, the local actors/organisations have been as active?

In People, the co-ordinator accepted a more backseat role despite the fact that she saw the need for a stronger and clearer co-ordination of the partnership. Here the partnership contained strong *local* co-ordinators and weak partners. The Rural Renewal, however, there was a strong co-ordinator who had the full support of the development partnership.

• Could the co-ordinator of the People partnership have driven the process of clarifying the aims of the partnership and the division of responsibility more forcefully, despite the fact that many members of the partnership signalled that they did not want this? Should other partners have intervened to clarify the situation regarding aims and responsibility?

In Rural Renewal, however, the co-ordinator played a clearer and more active role in uniting the partnership and linking the various sub-projects together. The strong role of the co-ordinator in Rural Renewal may relate to the complicated organisational structure (see Figure 4). The co-ordinator was the person with the best overview of the organisation and operations.

- Is there a risk that the co-ordinator will become too strong in terms of knowledge, contacts and decisions in an organisation where it is difficult to get an overall view? How can participation, transparency and influence – not to mention empowerment – be ensured in a structure like this?
- Is there a risk of development being over-organised in development partnerships as large as those we describe above?

It is natural that conflicts arise in the course of innovative development work. It should be expected that conflicts will become more frequent in the implementation phase. Agreeing on working methods, the budget and so on in the initiation phase is not so difficult. The participants are "in principle" in agreement on objectives, participation, the utilisation of resources etc. Experience has shown that it is in the course of the operational work that he participants' hidden motives come to the fore and conflicts can arise.

> "If you don't get involved in a conflict in a development partnership then you haven't gone as far as you should, you haven't really gotten to the bottom of things" (An Equal co-ordinator).

In the People partnership, there were a number of conflicts.

- Are conflicts always negative? Can a lack of conflict indicate a lack of openness, commitment and critical reflection?

"Diversity in Enterprise" is one of the many development partnerships that illustrates that conflicts can arise as a result of unclear aims. A failure to secure real agreement, support and understanding regarding the aim of the partnership led to conflict in this case. On the one hand, there were those who felt that the aim of the partnership was to get a certain number of companies to set up business in the region, while others believed that the aim was to change structures and attitudes to enable discriminated or excluded groups to start companies.

The conflict had a negative impact on the partnership's work and its relations with the discriminated groups. Were the discriminated groups indirect target groups in that it was the unemployed who would be given jobs in the new companies, or were they participants on the same terms as other partners and a group that would be strengthened as a result of structural changes so that their opportunities to start their own companies would be increased?

- Do you work *for* or *with* the discriminated groups?
- How should the work be conducted – experimentally and flexibly with the aim of learning, developing and creating innovative solutions, or by solving the problems using methods that you already know "work"?

The role of the co-ordinator

Responsibility for resolving a conflict within a partnership often lies with the co-ordinator. The competence of the co-ordinator is often tested to the full in these situations, which is an example of one of the many difficulties that the role of the co-ordinator entails.

The co-ordinator for Rural Renewal says that he has been more or less forced to work with the administration of the partnership at the same time as several of the partners expect him to act as a "project manager".

- What does the role of the co-ordinator entail in the implementation phase? Is the ideal situation to have partners who are "equals" and drive the work while the co-ordinator takes care of the administration?

A problem that has been noted is the timing of the recruitment of co-ordinators/project managers. In the People partnership, the local project co-ordinators were not recruited until the initiation phase was complete and the

Equal application was granted. This procedure seems to be common in the partnerships, as they are not usually prepared to employ people before the partnership is formed and the funding is secured. Recruiting and appointing people after everything is "ready" may however have negative consequences, especially with regard to consensus on content and methods.

- How can consensus on terms such as empowerment, co-operation etc. be created when the co-ordinator and sub-project managers are involved at a later stage? Who is responsible for creating consensus?
- How can co-ordinators get up to date with what has and has not been done when they are not recruited and involved in the operations until afterwards?

Participation

Both of the development partnerships have a complex organisational structure. Constructing such complex organisations is often seen as a prerequisite for achieving diversity and the ability to influence various regulatory systems. But what happens to participation in such large and complex organisations? In the Equal Programme, participation is also required to take place in a form that promotes empowerment. Consider the following questions:

- What is required in a large partnership to ensure that all of the partners see and understand the entire picture and grasp the decision-making process?
- Is there a risk that non-profit, inexperienced or small actors/organisations will be excluded and that the partnerships will instead be dominated by highly-qualified and affluent partners? Is it possible to organise for empowerment and participation? Does the organisation suit all the partners in terms, for example, of times for meeting, forms of work etc.?
- Is the commitment of the strategic actors as great as that of the smaller and more ideological organisations? Who is responsible for dealing with a situation in which it becomes apparent that one of the partners lacks commitment?

As we have described above, the People partnership and Rural Renewal are both complex organisations that conduct a wide range of operations. This raises particular questions and reflections concerning participation and empowerment. However, in order to further illustrate how development partnerships in the Equal Programme can be organised, we would like to briefly describe a much smaller and more homogenous development partnership – “The Power of Words”.

The Power of Words is a development partnership that works with empowerment, and the discriminated group has itself between closely and actively involved in the partnership. The Power of Words works with immigrant women and the national programme for Swedish language training for immigrants (SFI), with the aim of improving the efficiency of this programme and increasing the employability of the women. When the partnership was formed, there was a strong desire to really focus on the discriminated group.

As the Equal Programme requires that the work should be conducted in the form of a partnership, the idea came up of involving the immigrant women in the partnership itself, i.e. that they should participate as partners. However, as no formal organisation for these women existed at the time, an entirely new association was founded first.

This association, which runs various activities relating to integration and arranges meetings designed to bring people together, thus became one of the partners. In order to make it possible for the women to participate, the meetings and the work of the partnership were adapted in various ways. For example, interpreters are used when necessary during partnership meetings and the meetings are sometimes divided into two parts; one that deals mostly with administrative issues and one that deals with development issues that relate to the activities in a more concrete way. This made it possible for the association to participate in the partnership. However, as the association is a voluntary, non-profit association it has found it difficult to participate in all the meetings and address all the issues. The representatives of the discriminated group thus participate only in those parts of the work that they believe to be of most interest.

The foundation of the association has been described as a precondition for empowerment in the development work, while participation in the partnership has entailed empowerment and development for the women who have gained influence over the development partnership and its activities. This has also changed the way the development partnership works, for example the way it conducts meetings as described above.

The Power of Words is a relatively small development partnership in which the driving force is primarily provided by three individuals. The work takes place in close proximity to the discriminated group, as two of these three individuals are employed by the partnership. The same people work with the concrete operations of the partnership as with the administration and strategic issues. This direct contact with the partnership has made it easier for the discriminated group to participate. Many of the smaller partnerships of the Equal Programme feel that it has been easier for them to generate broad participation than is the case in most of the large partnerships.

- Is it easier to organise for participation in a small partnership? How can different needs relating to the culture of meetings, times, the role of the chairperson etc. be taken into account?

The fact that The Power of Words has so clearly focused on the discriminated group has, however, meant that the effort to involve more strategic actors/organisations in the partnership has not been as intensive. Looking back, the co-ordinator feels that she would retain the focus on the discriminated group if she were to start from scratch today, but that she would also work more with the other actors and demand more from the strategic partners as it has been difficult to get them involved in the work.

- Does a primary focus on the discriminated group and a high level of participation always mean that issues such as structural impact and the involvement of strategic partners become less important? Or, is it possible to combine the effort to promote the empowerment and participation of the discriminated group with structural impact and the participation of strategically important partners?

In the Power of Words, the association only takes part in some parts of the partnership's meetings, which raises further questions about participation.

- Is it possible to have partners that only take part in some elements of the partnership's work? What happens to the commitment of these partners? Is the mandate of these partners weaker than that of the others?
- What does introducing empowerment into the partnership itself, not just into the sub-projects, entail for the other partners? Does increasing the participation and influence of the discriminated group mean that other partners feel that they have had to "give away" power and influence?

Another important question relating to participation is what use a partnership should make of consultants or other external experts, and how? In Rural Renewal, consultants were included in the partnership from the start. There is a risk that such participation will be strongly linked to particular individuals, and it may therefore be difficult to ensure long-term involvement and commitment.

- How can a partnership involve consultants but at the same time avoid the risk that knowledge will be lost if the consultants leave the partnership?

In the implementation phase, it becomes clear that the work of a partnership that aims to promote innovation entails achieving a balance between the operational aspects of the work and development. There is a natural tendency for the focus of those involved to lean more towards operational issues, but if the operations are to be innovative it is important that there is flexibility in the way that operations are run in order to provide scope for reflection, consideration and change. Otherwise, the Equal Programme will not be the experimental workshop that it is intended to be.

Summarising reflections on the "during" phase

It seems that the foundations of a successful partnership are primarily laid in the initiation phase. Successful initiation work provides a good basis for successful work in the implementation phase. Many of the problems that arise during implementation can be traced to the initiation work. This does not mean, however, that it less important to ask yourself the right questions to ensure that you work in the implementation phase in a well-considered and conscious way. Before we leave the "during" phase, we would therefore like to draw your attention to some of the questions that we feel it is particularly important to take into account in this phase:

- What does the fact that the partners share a joint responsibility for the development work throughout the partnership entail? And – in particular – what does this mean in terms of concrete action?

Participating in the planning stage and brainstorming good ideas is one thing, but it is only when the times comes to put these ideas into practice at the same time as the operations of the home organisation still have to be managed and run on a daily basis that the joint responsibility for the development work of the development partnership is put to the test.

Many development partnerships run their research or trial activities in the form of sub-projects and/or local partnerships. It is often here that the concrete results of the partnership's work become apparent. It is through these activities that many partners achieve their short-term operational objectives (e.g. that a predetermined number of people find employment). There is a risk, therefore, that the partners will become too absorbed in such activities.

- How can the focus on the overall picture be maintained in the development partnership so that autonomous operations do not take over? Where do the short-term results and the experience gained in the trials end up? Who is responsible for ensuring that these are assimilated, disseminated and applied?

In many cases, changes in the partners' home organisations are required if the development work is to lead to any long-term effects. However, as the work of the development partnerships of the Equal Programme should be compared to that of an experimental workshop in which new ideas and methods are tested, it is difficult to plan for the changes that must be made in the home organisations in advance. The development work may identify unforeseen and unexpected needs and this may place great demands on the partners when they have to shoulder their responsibility for adopting the results – even within their own organisations. If there is a genuine shared desire to promote innovation and a genuine acceptance of joint responsibility for the development work, then we believe that this can lead to the changes that the development work aims to achieve.

In the next section, we examine how the experience gained in the implementation phase is utilised and disseminated in order to lead to the changes that were the aims of the implementation phase. In other words, how the results achieved create long-term effects.

Working in Partnerships – The Third Phase

This section is primarily based on one partnership, “The Faces of Diversity”. We begin by briefly describing the partnership and its methods in the final phase, the phase “after” the development work. In connection with this presentation, we raise a number of questions that illustrate dilemmas and difficulties. Finally, we highlight the role of the co-ordinator and participation and also refer to the experience of other partnerships.

Before we get to the description of the partnership, we would like to draw the reader’s attention to what dissemination and impact activities can entail. It can be tempting to see the dissemination phase as an opportunity to market your own work, which is not surprising if you have worked with something for a long time and achieved good results. However, the aim of the Equal Programme is not just to disseminate good examples and best practice. The aim is, above all, to achieve structural impact and changes in the long term. An important basis for the dissemination and impact work is therefore to agree on *what* you want to disseminate, *who* you want to influence and *why*.

The development partnership The Faces of Diversity

The Faces of Diversity aims to strengthen the work on diversity and integration in the County of Östergötland and to create a regional network for the exchange of experience. The objective is that every individual in the county, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability, should be given the opportunity to use their competence to the full. The Faces of Diversity works on the basis of two platforms called the Experimental Workshop and the Experience Dialogue. Through the Experimental Workshop, the partnership has been able to provide financial support and expertise to development projects working with diversity issues in that companies, municipalities and other actors/organisations have been able to apply for funds for pilot projects to develop and test models for diversity. The Experience Dialogue has worked with the dissemination of knowledge and the creation of networks, for example by arranging seminars. Initially, the partnership was organised with a separate group within the partnership with responsibility for external communication, but a person was soon employed for this task as communication is a demanding job that requires time, know-how and commitment.

The ambition for the dissemination work was to influence and have an impact on attitudes in society in general, partly by informing people about the work of the partnership and disseminating the experience gained. Among other things, an advertising bureau was commissioned to print posters that were displayed throughout the county. These posters pictured well-known people from the county who, free of charge, decided to lend their support to this effort to spread information about diversity and integration. Another concrete example was to arrange an exhibition at one of the major libraries in the county with the help of university students. Yet another dissemination activity was, through the Experience Dialogue, to arrange both open and more specialised seminars, all of which attracted a full house. The co-ordinator believes that one of the critical success factors was the ambition to have attractive, professionally-designed invitations and information material for all of the events arranged.

Apart from the type of wide ranging dissemination activities described above, the networks of the various partners were also used in the dissemination work. Thanks to these networks, The Faces of Diversity has over 300 contacts on its e-mailing list.

Initial questions to discuss

In The Faces of Diversity, the dissemination activities mainly comprised information campaigns and the utilisation of existing networks, but also an exhibition.

- How much funding should be allocated to printed information material and who should the material be aimed at? Are there other information channels that can be used?
- How do we know when a change in attitudes has been achieved? How can a change in attitudes lead to structural changes?

Using the Experimental Workshop, the partnership also built up a project database on the Internet. This presented all the projects involved in the partnership's various experimental operations. However, although a lot of good projects have been carried out, it has been difficult to bring them to the attention of the public. Experience shows that the Internet can be a good tool for spreading information to people who use it regularly, but that it should mainly be seen as a complement to other forms of dissemination.

Above we have given examples of how dissemination activities can be carried out using an information strategy designed to influence and change attitudes in society at large, which was one of the partnership's main aims. This gives rise to the following question:

- When should we use an information strategy, where it is enough to provide information for a change to take place, and when should we use a learning strategy in which impact takes place by involving those we want to influence the work?

The experience gained during the work of The Faces of Diversity development partnership shows that a combination of the information and learning strategies is required to change attitudes. The information campaign enables the partnership to reach a wider audience and it acts as a continual reminder, while the learning strategy has a more profound effect. The example of this partnership also raises the question of how an information campaign can be followed up. Perhaps a combination of activities based on both an information strategy and a learning strategy is required here?

Changing structures

The dissemination work reveals whether the correct strategies for the composition of the partnership have been adopted. In many cases, partnerships have been made up of partners who have successfully contributed to the trial activities at the operational level while dissemination has often been left to those who "own" the structures. One of the major challenges facing the development partnerships seems to be to combine the (usually) local level of the trial operations with the (usually) regional or national level of the structures.

- Is the partnership composed of partners who can both conduct trial operations and influence structures? Can structural impact be achieved through other channels or contacts?

But what can you do if it is not until you get to the dissemination phase that you discover that the organisations that are really needed to achieve structural change are not members of the partnership? Rural Renewal is a partnership that chose to link an organisation to the work of the partnership without actually including it as a formal partner. This was the National Rural Development Agency which was included as a "non-partner" in order to achieve structural impact.

- Are there "non-partners" that should be linked to the partnership? What are the advantages of having them as "non-partners"?

A problem that commonly arises in connection with dissemination work and that several partnerships have mentioned is the risk that only those who are already interested in the issue concerned will take up the information. These are also the only actors/organisations who attend dissemination conferences and seminars.

- Will dissemination work really lead to change if those who are reached are primarily actors who are "already converted"? How can dissemination work be broadened so that "new" actors outside the existing network of contacts are reached?

In contrast to the Faces of Diversity, which organised a number of seminars and conferences on its own behalf, the development partnership Diversity in Västernorrland chose to take part in seminars and conferences arranged by others in order to pass on its experience.

- Is it possible to reach "new" target groups by participating in seminars and conferences arranged by others? Is the probability of reaching the "right" target groups greater if the partnership organises seminars and conferences itself?

In the presentation of The Faces of Diversity, we described how the partnership used the partners existing networks to circulate information, invitations and so on. However, the experience gained in several Equal partnerships reveals that it is not just as a means of spreading information that the existing networks of the partners should be used. It is probable that most partners and their organisations belong to different contexts that can be used as a source of contacts in the course of dissemination and impact work. In order to get in touch with important individuals – for example politicians, senior public officials and company directors – someone is often required to "open the door". It may even be the case that more people than you think already know about the partnership and its work due to these networks. A tip from several of the development partnerships is to use existing networks and the various contexts to which the partners belong. This can save a lot of energy in the effort to inform people about the partnership and to get them to realise the importance of its work.

Experience also shows that it can be particularly difficult to reach actors in the private sector. The People partnership managed to get the companies involved to write in their annual reports that they would continue to pursue learning at work on the basis of the models developed. One of People's local co-ordinators believes that this means that a change has been achieved in the industrial sector that will be sustainable in the long term. This co-ordinator feels that a precondition for achieving changes in business and industry is to exert influence at the "right" level, which in this case is the management level.

- How is dissemination and impact work conducted in relation to companies? What different demands are placed on dissemination and impact work when the target groups consist of operations that are directly financed by operational revenues rather than operations that are publicly funded or are NGOs?

Disseminating and implementing change, especially in structures, requires strategic work. A recommendation from previous partnerships is to systemise the work by drawing up a dissemination plan. It is important to identify the results the partnership wants to disseminate, but above all to identify the actors that the partnership needs to present the results to in order to achieve change. But how can the results be disseminated in a way that involves these actors so that change really takes place?

In many cases, structural changes require political decisions. Despite this, few of the development partnerships of the Equal Programme have involved politicians as active partners. A further difficulty is that political decisions are often based on ideological considerations, which means that conflicts of interest and power conflicts affect the possibility to change structures. Public officials implement and realise political decisions in practice, but the assignments come from the politicians. In order to achieve changes in the directives and assignments given to public officials, the partnerships also need to involve politicians. The following questions relate to influencing and disseminating information to politicians, as well as other actors:

- At what level should the issue be dealt with to achieve change? Is this a local, regional or national issue?
- How can a dialogue be created with actors who have not themselves taken part in the process relating to the problems that the partnership has worked with for several years?

This question illustrates the importance of involving actors outside the partnership at an early stage, not simply by providing information but by means of dialogue and participation. In this way, consensus and an understanding of the problem can be achieved early on, as well as a basis for a discussion on how to utilise the future results of the work and realise the identified needs for change. These discussions are important, not least when bearing in mind that the partnerships are not democratically elected. In the meeting with democratically-elected representatives, discussions of the partnerships' proposals concerning structural changes can be linked to the democratic system.

The effort to exert influence and create an impact that will change structures can thus be carried out using a range of strategies and is in various ways dependent on where and how the changes must take place. An important question that remains to be resolved, however, is to what extent it is possible to differentiate between the terms dissemination *and* impact. What is it that should be disseminated and how should the required impact be implemented? The question is whether the terms should not instead be linked together, i.e., dissemination (of results, information and so on) *for* impact (on structures etc.).

Internal or external impact

As we have pointed out earlier, working in partnerships is not only about trying to create external changes. By including the "right" partners in the partnership, i.e. partners that are willing to make changes in their own organisations, it should be possible to achieve long-term internal changes too. However, several development partnerships have shown that it can be difficult to work with dissemination and impact internally. Indeed, this can sometimes be more difficult than working with dissemination and impact in relation to other organisations and authorities.

- Who can exert influence and create impact so that changes take place? How should the partnership mobilise activities and resources for change? Should the focus of the partnership's dissemination and impact work be internal or external? What are the differences between these forms of dissemination?

The Faces of Diversity illustrates an important lesson – the importance of clarifying the expectations of the respective partner organisations with regard to their willingness to conduct internal change work. In retrospect, it is evident that the partnership should have demanded a declaration of intent from each partner during the initiation phase in order to clarify the thoughts and intentions behind their participation in the partnership. This would probably have increased the likelihood of internal changes taking place.

A concrete tip that may help to increase support and understanding and internal dissemination among colleagues in the partners' home organisations is to allow representatives of the partnership to visit each other's organisations. Experience has shown that it can be easier to get colleagues to listen to someone from outside the organisation than to listen to and assimilate what someone from within organisation says.

Participation

As we have mentioned earlier, the nature of participation in the Equal partnerships is intended to be somewhat special in that it should promote and encompass empowerment. The participation of the partners, but also their joint responsibility, lies at the core of the work of the partnerships and is the factor that most clearly differentiates the partnership organisation from other forms of organisation for conducting development work. It is therefore of the utmost importance that partnerships are organised and work in a way that enables the participation of the partners and the exercise of joint responsibility. The term empowerment, however, refers above all to the fact that the discriminated groups or individuals, i.e., the people who the partnership is striving to help or benefit – for example the unemployed, refugees, people on the long-term sick list – should participate in and influence the work.

- Is it possible to allow the discriminated to take part in the dissemination and impact work? How can this be done?
- Is it possible to combine the work on the empowerment and participation of the discriminated groups or individuals with structural impact and the participation of strategically important actors in the dissemination phase?

A concrete example of participation in the dissemination work is provided by the Diversity in Västernorrland development partnership, which involved the entire partnership in a media training course with a focus on writing and making presentations. The aim was to give everyone in the partnership the sense that they were participating in the contacts with the media and in the effort to present and publicise the work of the partnership externally.

- Who should represent the partnership externally? How important is it to give a professional impression compared to allowing all the partners to represent the partnership?

Another way of working with dissemination and impact is by means of the research or evaluation that is often included as part of the work of an Equal development partnership. In the People partnership, an interactive approach to the research meant that the discriminated groups themselves played a prominent role in the joint acquisition and assimilation of knowledge. The immigrants and sick-listed individuals concerned acted as co-researchers in the context of their own everyday lives. The immigrant group, for example conducted a survey of attitudes on various forms of discrimination with the assistance of professional researchers. This involved distributing questionnaires at various workplaces. The sick-listed group participated in the entire research process from the formulation of research aims to the analysis phase. Consequently, they also played an active part in the dissemination phase by presenting preliminary results to university courses, research conferences and in regional and transnational contexts. This joint process resulted in a decision by these participants to write a book about how they came to be sick listed and their way back into working life. This decision is a reaction to the fact that most of the literature in this area is written by so-called experts and almost always from a "helicopter" perspective. It is intended that the book will be used for educational purposes at universities and colleges, but also by personnel in the field and, not least, by managers and leaders who encounter these problems in their work. The book will also be distributed at dialogue seminars which will mainly be aimed at other people on the long-term sick list but also at the social insurance office, employment agency and workplaces.

- What is needed from the outside world and from the partnership at large to get the discriminated groups themselves to mobilise and contribute their own efforts and abilities to the extent required?

- How can the participant groups, already at the start of the work of the partnership, be prepared for active participation in the dissemination and impact work?

Combining empowerment processes at the participant level with structural impact requires the active involvement and commitment of all the partners in a partnership. Experience has shown that these empowerment processes must take place throughout the development work in order to make it possible to conduct the work together with the discriminated groups.

Participation in the dissemination and impact work does not necessarily relate to involving the partners alone, it may also relate to involving relevant actors/organisations outside the partnership. As described above, interactive research can be used to support an empowerment process and the participation of discriminated groups (in People's case, people on the long-term sick list and immigrants). But interactive research also entails contacts and relations with many other actors. Such research can also act as a "bridge" between different actors and enable dissemination and impact in areas that it would otherwise be difficult to reach.

Another role that research can play in the work of a partnership is that it gives legitimacy to the results and the experience gained. Research can contribute to dissemination and impact by lifting the results and experience of the partnership to a generalisable level that makes them interesting in a broader context.

We have highlighted the importance of attempting to include actors outside the partnership in the dissemination process at an early stage, but we would also like to underline the difference between being informed and being a participant.

- How can commitment be created on the part of an actor who has not been involved from the start? How can we get organisations to take over responsibility for the problem area so that it is no longer treated as sideline outside their regular operations?
- What is required to ensure that work on the common issue/problem addressed by the partnership continues to be supported in the regular

operations of an organisation when the partnership no longer has external support, for example from the Equal Programme?

After all, the idea of partnerships is to address issues that affect several actors but that no one is solely responsible for or can resolve on their own.

- How can we avoid the issue once again "falling between two stools" when support from the Equal Programme is no longer available.

In order for the work of a partnership to really lead to structural changes, the actors must feel that they are affected by – and involved in – the issue, something that cannot normally be achieved simply by means of discussion.

Getting the partners to feel responsible for the issue after the end of the Equal period can be a problem in itself, but getting the external parties concerned to go on supporting work on the issue is probably an even greater problem. In the initiation phase, it is important to create consensus on – and clarify the joint responsibility for – the problem area *within* the partnership in terms, for example, of defining the problem and testing solutions. In the dissemination and impact phase, it is also important to get the actors to accept responsibility for the problem area, but here this may also include actors *outside* the partnership with the aim of ensuring long-term effects and sustainable development.

Summarising reflections of the phase "after" the development work

Even though we have previously underlined the importance of the development work itself, it is only when you have disseminated results and experience, and thereby achieved impact, that the work of the partnership can have any effects in the long term. One of the central aims of the Equal Programme is that the work of the partnerships should lead to changes in systems and attitudes. Here, we would like to summarise factors that seem to be particularly important in the effort to achieve these changes.

Partnerships should draw up clear strategies on how dissemination and impact work should be conducted, for example by using a dissemination plan. It is important to identify *what* should be disseminated, *why* and *to whom*.

- How can the legitimacy of, and commitment to, the work of the partnership be established and created even among those who have not been included as partners? Who are the "door openers" in the existing networks who can make it easier for the partnership to reach important actors/organisations?
- How can support and understanding for the work of the partnership be ensured so that it will be sustainable in the long term, i.e. so that the results are applied and integrated in existing structures?
- How can the work of the partnership continue after the end of the Equal period? Will the problem area still be addressed, or will the work come to an end once the external support is no longer available? If the work continues – has a point been reached at which work on the problem area can be integrated into the regular, everyday operations, or is there a need to go on working with the problem in the form of a partnership? In other words: Is there still a need to work on the issue together with other actors who are affected by it?

Other experience gained in the course of dissemination and impact work indicates that it can be difficult to combine the following:

- Long-term and strategic thinking with concrete results here and now.
- External impact with a willingness to achieve internal changes in one's own organisation.
- An information strategy for direct dissemination with a more "profound" impact to achieve sustainable development.
- Arranging one's own channels of communication but also creating links with the channels that already exist.

As we have mentioned earlier, perhaps the most important thing of all, is not to differentiate between dissemination *and* impact, but rather too see the dissemination activities as activities that take place *for* impact.

Working in Partnerships – The Transnational Work

So far, we have focused on the national partnerships and not dealt with the transnational work that forms an obligatory part of the Equal Programme. The question is how the work at the local/national and transnational levels is linked together to provide synergies. In many cases, the link seems to be unclear, or to be based on the idea that the transnational work should act as "the icing on the cake" in that trips abroad and study visits should provide stimulation and encouragement and contribute to learning.

The transnational work is seldom expected to lead to concrete results. Indeed, in some cases, this work is seen as something that is demanded of or forced upon a partnership, rather than as an important part of the development work. With hindsight, however, several of the co-ordinators feel that, under the right conditions, the transnational work can make an important contribution to the national work of the partnerships. Transnational co-operation can stimulate new thinking and innovative solutions, above all perhaps by expanding traditional lines of thought.

In this section, as in previous sections, we aim to provide a basis for reflection and dialogue. As many of the points we have made earlier are also relevant to transnational work, we will keep this section fairly short. We encourage you instead to consider and discuss which parts of the previous sections may also apply to the transnational activities.

Initiating transnational activities

Even though the transnational work is not usually at the top of the list of priorities during the initiation phase but may rather be seen as a burden in addition to everything else that has to be arranged, experience shows that a rapid and early start of this work forms the basis for successful co-operation later on. At the same time, every effort should be made right from the start to integrate the transnational work with the national work as far as possible. The transnational work should move the national work forward by providing new knowledge, challenging ingrained notions and offering new perspectives on the work at the national level. This requires more time and thought than is needed to arrange visits to each other countries simply because travelling is enjoyable.

At first, it may be difficult to see how concrete co-operation can take place, and the transnational work may initially be perceived as an inconvenience. The recruitment of transnational partners in the Equal Programme is conducted by using a database that contains descriptions of the operations of all the partnerships. Once partners have been found, the transnational partnership is expected to concretise the expected result of the transnational work even before the partners know very much about each other's operations and the conditions under which they work (as these have not yet acquired a particularly concrete form at such an early stage).

- How can the transnational activities be described before the partners even know which transnational partners they will have?
- How can we avoid a situation in which the partners see the transnational work as something that takes place at another "level"? Is the transnational work included in a natural way in the national work?
- What is the national context of the transnational partners? Is there an understanding of the differences between the various countries involved?

In order to facilitate the process of recruiting transnational partners, it may be a good idea to investigate what transnational contacts and international networks the partners "at home" already have. Many organisations have already established transnational co-operation in the course of their regular operations and it makes sense to put this to good use. Another method for making this process simpler may be to ask for references from conceivable transnational partners. Many partners will have been involved in other EU-funded programmes and references should therefore be available.

This may be sensible as experience shows that it is not always clear from the start why the respective partners want to participate. The People development partnership, for example, did not discover until several transnational meetings had already been held that the only aim of one of the transnational partners was to finance a consulting operation. This was discovered when the time came to adopt the activity plan and it was revealed that the partner had no funding for the activities apart from the fee for the consultant (who was also the co-ordinator). After a stormy meeting, this partner was excluded, and even though no major damage had been done the mistake had led to several unnecessary trips abroad. It is, however, unusual for partnerships to be dissatisfied afterwards with the "entire" transnational partnership. On the other hand, it is not unusual, as in People's case, for a partnership to be disappointed with an individual partner who has not lived up to the expectations. It is therefore important, in the same way as in the national work, to get to know each other first in order to become aware of preconditions and expectations.

Expectations and objectives

The aims and working methods of a transnational partnership should be discussed and clarified in the initial phase. This presupposes that the partners from the different countries set aside enough time and resources to "get to know each other" and to work on the production of joint programmes, strategies and forms of work. It takes time to develop co-operation between actors/organisations from different countries in the face of cultural differences, different traditions and different backgrounds. As in the national work, an introductory phase is required before the real work can start. Even though it is important to establish the transnational contacts quickly, experience also shows that you should not be in too much of a hurry to set a framework for the transnational organisation. You may find that it works better to keep an open attitude and feel your way forward, and that you will learn a lot of new things.

- What are the expected results and effects of the transnational work? Should the level of ambition be limited to learning from each other, or is the aim to create concrete results in the form of products, for example methods or tools for development work?

• Given the level of ambition adopted – what can realistically be expected in terms of commitment and time?

Experience has show that the results are often better if the co-operation leads to some form of common product or concrete project activity. One example from the Equal Programme is a transnational partnership that founded a jointly-owned company. In another example, discriminated groups from a national partnership were given the opportunity to spend a period of practical training with a transnational partner, which worked very well.

Transnational co-operation requires an understanding of each other's conditions, contexts, regulations, benefit and grant systems and so on. Sometimes, the basic preconditions in different countries vary so widely that the pattern of cause and effect in one cannot be related to the pattern in another. Nor does it become easier to understand each other if there are language difficulties. The language problem is not as a rule solved solely by means of translation. In some cases, one and the same translation can be understood entirely differently as different terms are interpreted in different ways.

One way of dealing with the language problem is to use interpreters, but this does not always solve the problem either. Sometimes, it may be better to try to agree on what certain terms and concepts stand for, instead of striving for a strictly correct translation (which in effect may not even be correct due to cultural differences that lead to different interpretations of terms and expressions).

• Is there consensus on, and a common understanding of, central terms? Do the words mean the same in the different countries?

• What are the possible consequences if the transnational partners define the terms differently from the national partners?

• How can we help participants who are nervous about speaking a foreign language or who are not used to working in a foreign language? Can formal meetings present greater language barriers than informal meetings? Can this nervousness be reduced, for example, by arranging social activities where the participants can get to know each other?

- What can an interpreter help with, and when is an interpreter unhelpful? Is the interpreter familiar with the issues concerned? Does he or she appreciate nuances relating to central terms and concepts?
- Who should bear the costs for the interpreters? Is it worth employing interpreters so that no one is excluded from transnational co-operation due to a lack of language skills/experience?

Experience has shown that high unplanned costs can arise for an individual partnership if the host country has to provide and pay for interpreters. It may be a good idea to adopt English as the common working language and let each country arrange for interpreters according to its own needs.

It is important, however, that no one is excluded from the transnational work due to language difficulties, and to prevent language from becoming such a significant barrier that a partnership is forced to appoint a specific individual as its transnational representative. Who takes part in the transnational work should be determined by what transnational co-operation can lead to rather than by language skills.

Participation

Irrespective of the level of ambition for the transnational work, the work must have the support and understanding of both the development partnership and the respective partners' home organisations. All of those involved should feel that they are able to participate in the work. Initially, therefore, clear objectives should be set for the transnational work, and each national development partnership must ensure that these objectives are fully understood and supported within the partnership. It is important to strive for as great a degree of unity as possible among all those concerned.

- To what degree should the work be predetermined/planned or open-ended? Clear objectives and timetables can create structure and clarity, especially at the beginning, but is there a risk that the work will be become too formal and predictable?

In the Exchanging Resources development partnership, a very clear plan outlining how the transnational work should be conducted and each partner's expectations was drawn up at an early stage. Everything from products to meetings and the final conference was planned. Subsequently, the transnational partnership realised that the plan was too ambitious in relation to the time that was allocated to joint meetings. Having time for meetings is decisive to keeping the process alive. This partnership feels that the positive results of its work are largely due to the fact that so much time was spent together at an early stage on establishing expectations. The entire partnership was involved. When problems arose, the partners knew how to solve them. This leads us to the question of who should represent the national partnership transnationally.

- At what level should the co-operation be organised?
- Should the transnational co-operation be thematically based, i.e. based on a common content and common interests?
- What role should the discriminated groups play in the work? Should they be the objects or the subjects in the work to promote and implement change?
- Who or how many members of the partnership should be responsible for the transnational contacts? Is it better to let a few people travel on a few occasions, or to let one individual travel more frequently?
- Should the same people always represent the partnership transnationally, or should as many as possible be given the opportunity to take part?

Having good relations is important in terms of confidence, a sense of security and trust. The participants must be given time to get to know each other, preferably in an informal atmosphere involving social activities. It is for this reason that it may be an advantage (especially initially) to meet each other fairly regularly. The development partnership Diversity in Västernorrland is an example of a partnership where it proved too difficult to conduct the transnational work on the basis of a "fairness principle", that is to allow all the partners to participate equally in the transnational work.

Diversity in Västernorrland instead looked at who would get the most out of representing the partnership transnationally. The importance of continuity should also be taken into account, so that it is not a case of new people meeting all the time. Continuity is important for developing relations and creating trust.

Irrespective of who represents the national partnership transnationally, it is important to clarify how the other partners can participate in this work. Even though only a few individuals may be directly involved in the transnational contacts, all of the partners should have a sense that they are participating. It is especially important that the discriminated groups themselves can participate as they are, after all, the ones whose knowledge of the problem is based on first-hand experience and who the work is ultimately designed to benefit.

A concrete way of preventing the transnational work being limited to a few select individuals is, before each trip to visit a transnational partner, to allow those who will travel to work together with the rest of the partnership to draw up a plan for the trip that specifies aims and expectations and how reporting should be carried when they return home.

Another way to increase participation, without increasing costs for travel abroad, is to communicate using IT. Communicating in this way, however, has proved to be difficult. Meeting face-to-face plays an important role in developing trust and confidence. This means that it may be difficult, especially at the initial stage, to replace physical meetings with contacts by e-mail or chat functions.

- Can IT communication be an aid that comes into use after personal relations have been established an uncertainty has been overcome?
- How can IT communication be used as a means of involving more members of the respective national partnerships in the transnational work?

In conclusion, we would like to point out the importance of equitable relations. An immediate positive perception of co-operation presupposes socially equitable relations. This is even more relevant in the case of transnational co-operation where there may be more difficulties than in national co-operation, not least because of cultural differences.

It is important to be aware of factors relating to power and influence – especially from a gender perspective. Many countries have a strong hierarchical tradition with structures in which men predominate. As in the national work, it is important to refuse to accept that women are given a subordinate role or pushed into the background. Many countries also have much more hierarchical structures that are based, for example, on professional titles. In some transnational partnerships in the Equal Programme, there have been participants that would only speak to other participants on the same hierarchical level as themselves, or to those on a higher level. This can make it difficult for the discriminated groups to make their voices heard and risks creating a sense of exclusion that means they will no longer want to participate in the transnational work.

Other experience has shown that language barriers – as well as economic status – can lead to inequitable relations. We have already mentioned language barriers and the importance of eliminating them. Differences in economic status can lead to problems in terms of power and influence in a similar way. If a transnational partner has greater financial resources than the others, this partner can easily acquire a position of power over the others.

So far, we have discussed a number of difficulties relating to transnational work, but also the added value that transnational co-operation can provide. We would like to conclude this section by summing up some of the most important factors to take into account in the course of transnational work.

Summarising reflections on transnational work

Giving the transnational work sufficient time at the initial stage and planning for this from the very first day on which the Equal partnership starts it work has proved to be perhaps the most important factor in determining whether transnational work leads to added value or not. The partnership concept – like the concept of transnational co-operation – is based on long-term relations. The period during which Equal funding is provided, however, may seem far too short for this. It is therefore important to consider the long-term aspects of the work right from the start. It is also equally important to be aware of the differences that exist and to make something positive of them. This requires curiosity and the “right” level of ambition.

- What levels of ambition do the partnerships from the different countries have for the transnational work?
- Is there an understanding of cultural differences and is there consensus on central terms?
- What does being a transnational partner entail? What is expected from your own partnership and what do you expect from the partnerships in other countries?

It is important that the transnational work does not become something that is carried out alongside the work of the national partnership, or something that only one person or a few people can benefit from. It is therefore vital that the transnational work is integrated with the work of the national partnership and that the experience gained can be utilised in the national partners’ own organisations.

- How are the transnational work and the national work integrated? Where are the results and experience of the transnational work assimilated and utilised, and who is responsible for ensuring that they are put to good use “at home”?

It is only when the transnational work moves the national work forward – provides new knowledge, challenges ingrained notions or opens up new perspectives – that it will create positive effects, and it is then that the transnational work will no longer be seen as a burden.

How should we proceed?

We have described the work of a partnership as a *process*, i.e. something that develops over time – with different demands and requirements during the initiation, implementation and dissemination phases of the development work. We feel that we have been able to assimilate and present a range of different experience on the opportunities and obstacles associated with working in a partnership.

The ambition has not been to provide ready-made answers, but to encourage dialogue and reflection, above all in the new development partnerships of the Equal Programme.

We are aware that a book in itself cannot provide the support required in such a complex development context. The decisive factor is whether the book is used actively by the participants.

We are now thinking about what additional support our National Thematic Group can provide to increase the expertise and effectiveness of the work of the partnerships. We have considered the following elements/measures:

1. Make it possible for the active members of the group to pass on their experience to the new partnerships – by arranging meetings or acting as tutors, lecturers, mentors and so on.
2. Organise seminars and conferences to discuss our experience with new participants in the partnerships.
3. Organise a course (at the university level) for partnership co-ordinators – e.g. in the form of a series of seminars based on a problem-based and project-oriented working method.
4. Build-in learning between the old and new partnerships in our NTG, which is now being reconstructed.

These are just a few ideas on how the work could continue, but all of this is based on a decisive precondition: There must be a clear demand from those who are directly concerned! They must feel a need for support for ongoing development, and they must also be prepared to set aside the time required for this learning.

We look forward to continuing our work. If we have learnt anything, it is that a development partnership is a complex form of organisation. A high level of know-how and expertise and ongoing support are needed for a development partnership to work as intended.

Other Forms of Organisation for Development Work

We have now presented examples of how a number of partnerships are organised, but above all we have provided a basis for further reflection. Hopefully, we have also by this stage managed to create a greater understanding of what the term partnership really means. We would like to conclude, however, by presenting a number of other terms and concepts and relating partnership to these other forms for organising development work.

Describing partnership as an organisational form and relating it to other concepts such as projects, networks, clusters, innovation systems and the Triple Helix is not simple and could indeed fill a book of this size. It is not possible to explain or define these terms simply or explicitly, and in everyday speech they are often used carelessly without really thinking about their specific meaning. Our point of departure here is that the terms stand for different strategies that are used to stimulate and implement innovation and development.

Networks

The term that first became popular and reached a real breakthrough in the late 1980s and early 1990s was *networks*. Most of the literature of that time on the development of small companies used the term networks. However, it was not only within the field of development that networks became a popular concept. People also began to talk about social networks, purchasing and sales networks and so on. Theoretically, a differentiation is usually made between development-oriented networks and production networks. The aim of a production network is to improve the efficiency of production and conduct business in a smarter way. A development network aims instead to increase the ability of a company to conduct strategic development in the long term, i.e. to strengthen the company's development organisation.

One way of theoretically categorising networks is to differentiate between networks that have grown organically and arranged networks. Some people claim that a network does not have a beginning or an end but consists of interlinked relations that continue to survive in one form or another. If an actor drops out, the network still sticks together. Changes in one relation have an impact on other relations. Those who view networks in this way are usually referring to organic networks and production networks.

Arranged networks, on the other hand, can be expected to be funded, led and organised by one or several actors who want to achieve a change or a development of some kind (Nilsson 2004). In these contexts, a network is regarded as a collaboration between a defined and limited number of actors (for example the networks that receive support from the Objective 3-Programme).[8] The term arranged networks can in fact be seen as a paradox, as a network is really a voluntary, horizontal organisation in which the participants govern themselves.

The term network, on the other hand, says nothing about *which* actors should form the network, unlike the Triple Helix for example where all of the three "pillars" must be represented. Clusters, innovation systems and the Triple Helix system (see below) are, however, all made up of one or several networks.

Clusters

A *cluster* is usually described as a group of companies in a specific area that are located close to each other geographically and linked in various ways in terms of similar or complementary needs. The term cluster is thus a way of describing links between companies, but also relates to links between the companies and their customers, competitors, industrial organisations,

8. The European Social Fund's Objective 3-programme (see www.vaxtkraft.se) aims to stimulate change and renewal work in Swedish working life and thus promote growth and employment. The focus is on the individual and his or her participation in the development process.

actors in the public sector and so on. In a cluster, there may therefore be actors that do not have any relation to, or formal co-operation with, each other, although they still contribute jointly to the stimulation of innovation and development. The term cluster partly replaces the terms "sector" and "branch" (Hallencreutz et al. 2001). "Sector", however, has a broader meaning than cluster, while "branch" has a narrower meaning. If we describe a branch as being *horizontal* and a supply chain as *vertical*, then a cluster is usually described as *circular*. A cluster does not therefore describe the relations between actors, but rather presents a picture of geographically-concentrated production systems or "regional brands".

Innovation systems

Innovation systems are, unlike clusters, directly related to *how effectively* new knowledge is created and used. According to VINNOVA,[9] an innovation system consists of:

> "the network of organisations, people and regulations within which the creation, dissemination and innovative exploitation of technology and other knowledge takes place" (Hallencreutz et al. 2001, p. 19).

Innovation processes usually take place in environments where there is geographical proximity to specialised knowledge, local social networks and trust between the parties concerned.

While clusters are based on how actors are linked to a specific industrial branch, i.e. they are branch-wide, innovation systems take the entire interacting system into account. An innovation system can thus be described in terms of important actors and components such as small and large companies, universities and colleges, government bodies, risk capital providers and regulatory systems. Innovation systems can be both geographical and

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9. VINNOVA – The National Agency for Innovation Systems – is a government agency tasked with promoting sustainable growth by developing effective innovations systems and funding problem-oriented research. To work with this task, VINNOVA has approximately 150 employees and an annual budget of around SEK 1 billion.

sectoral. The geographical innovation systems can be found nationally, regionally and locally. There is a link between innovations systems and clusters in that it is the interaction between them that strengthens long-term competitiveness.

Critics say that the term innovation systems fails to take account of elements such as randomness and subjectivity, i.e. elements that are typical of networks. The most important thing, from the critics' point of view, is to create a large number of relations and meetings, not to "build systems". There is a risk that individuals and innovators/entrepreneurs will get lost in large systems, and that systems that are based on the established relations in a region – for example from the gender point of view – will have a preserving rather than a renewing effect.

Triple Helix

A term which has had increasing impact recently is *Triple Helix*. The Triple Helix model is usually used in connection with, or within the framework of, the concept of innovation systems. In the Triple Helix concept, there is an assumption that an innovation system requires the participation of society's three basic "pillars" in order for the system to become widespread and the development achieved to be sustainable. The three pillars that must interact in the Triple Helix are the industrial sector, the research sector and the public sector. Advocates of the Triple Helix claim that none of these three Pillars can manage to achieve sustainable development and long-term competitiveness on their own. It is in the interplay between them that development resources can be co-ordinated and investments can provide a greater return, thus enabling sustainable development.

Many forms of collaboration are initiated and supported by public and/or political funding. We have previously mentioned VINNOVA as a government agency with the task of promoting growth processes. Another example we have mentioned is the Objective 3-Programme, which aims to strengthen the position of the individual on the labour market by providing training and other measures. Leader+ is another example of a programme covered by the EU's Community-wide initiative.

Partnership

What then *is* partnership in comparison with the systems and forms of co-operation presented above? Is partnership yet another new term for a traditional way of working? Is there a risk that partnership will become a new in-word that will be used for all conceivable forms of co-operation in the same way as the term “networks”? We believe that the term partnership, in its real sense, designates a different way of working compared to traditional network co-operation.

Significantly, there does not seem to be any clear and unanimous definition of partnership either nationally or internationally (SOU 2003:123). All definitions refer, however, to a more or less formal co-operation between actors in the private and public sectors – such as state authorities and agencies, municipalities, county councils, autonomous regional bodies and bodies for municipal co-operation, actors in the field of industrial policy at the local and regional levels, business and industry and commercial and industrial organisations, trade unions and other organisations and a great number of other actors with an interest in growth and development issues, e.g. local development groups and community associations. Actors at the national, regional, municipal and local levels are often united in one and the same partnership.

Partnership is thus a form of work used in social planning and development work in which actors with complementary and sometimes overlapping interests and areas of responsibility are involved in a common planning, decision-making and implementation process. The aim is to promote participation in order to mobilise and co-ordinate resources and thus improve the efficiency of the work. What differentiates partnerships from, for example, networks is that they have been given a *nominal status*. On the other hand, partnerships have no formal decision-making powers, nor are they regulated by law.

Working in a partnership entails awareness and commitment on the part of those involved in a more explicit way than co-operating in a network does. While networks are based on voluntary participation, partnerships are put together with the aim of working together to perform a task or solve a problem. The partners “own” the task together. A partnership should, in contrast to a network, be composed of the actors that will make it possible to perform the task concerned. With the “wrong” partners in a partnership, the desired changes will not be achieved, which is similar to what the advocates of the Triple Helix say. The difference between partnership and the Triple Helix, however, is that the adopted task governs the selection of partners in a partnership, while the Triple Helix always presupposes co-operation between society’s three basic “pillars”. As a partner in a partnership it is not enough to willingly contribute to an external change, awareness that the external change may also require an internal change, i.e. within one’s own organisation, is also required. More is thus demanded than a willingness to “make decisions by consensus” or “meet each other half way”, as in traditional forms of co-operation between different parties.

In contrast to networks and project organisations, in which individual actors can take part for the sake of their own development, a partnership entails a real *commitment* on the part of those actors that become partners. As a partner, an actor is one of several that together will take concerted action to solve a (social) problem or achieve (structural) changes. Networks, clusters, innovations systems and the Triple Helix can therefore be described as forms of organisation that are more unconditionally composed than partnerships.

As the partners are part of the solution of the partnership’s common problem, partnerships require integration with the regular operations of those involved in a more explicit way than the forms of organisation mentioned above. A comparison with the traditional project organisation illustrates this difference. The activities of a project usually take place outside or alongside the regular operations of the actors concerned, and in the *best* case successful project results are integrated with the regular operations following the completion of the project. During the course of the project, however, the activities and organisation of the project lie outside the regular operations. The link between regular operations and the work of a partnership is clearer. In order to be successful, the work of a partnership requires support and understanding, willingness to change and commitment on the part of the organisations that form the partnership. The activities of the partnership cannot therefore lie outside the regular operations. The partnership is thus simultaneously *within* the structures and the existing operations and *outside* – in the form of an organisation for collaboration that may temporarily be funded by means of external support. Partnerships handle financial resources and make decisions. In many cases, they also run activities that involve participants from, for example, the employment agency or the social insurance office

The role of partnerships – to be outside the regular operations and structures but at the same time to work within them – risks giving them an unclear status. The need for transparency, the possibility to call people to account and a clear division of roles are therefore of central importance. The fact that partnerships make decisions and run operations that have a real effect on both individuals, i.e. those the partnership is trying to help, and public authorities, means that it is important to discuss the issue of democracy in partnerships. What representation is there in the partnerships? Who can influence the decisions of the partnerships and how? Is there a risk that important social decisions will made by public officials rather than by politicians?

The potential that partnerships offer, and which we would particularly like to underline, is encompassed by the drive, energy, and ability to take action that stems from the explicit commitment of each of the partners, although the unclear status of partnerships gives rise to a number of difficulties that it is important to consider. We cannot say whether partnerships are the best way of achieving concerted action, but given an awareness of how partnerships work we do believe that they are certainly one way. We would, however, like to point out once again that working in a partnership should be seen as a learning process in which there is not *one* best solution that applies in all situations; the solution is tied to the local context.

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