ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Masters Thesis
Development and International Cooperation: Africa
Broadening Master Course
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The notion of partnership was introduced in the revitalised Swedish Africa policy as the key to the new co-operating relationship between Sweden and Africa. The objectives of this study are to explore the meanings of partnership in the context of Swedish development cooperation, and how this concept was manifested in the Göteborg - Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMM) Partnership 2003-2005. The Göteborg-NMMM partnership is unique in the sense that it is one of the few examples where Sida, with the approval of the government of South Africa, collaborates directly with a municipality. In 2003-2005, it embraced collaboration in the following sectors: Tourism, Arts and Culture, Municipal and Urban Planning, Business and the Tertiary sector. The notion of partnership has been investigated in different contexts and relative practices. While many actors advocate partnership, there is no consensus as to what precisely differentiates partnership from other forms of inter-organizational collaborations. According to Benington and Geddes (2001:2), a way of conceptualizing partnership is to look at it as a point in the continuum with the well-defined formal contractual arrangement in one end and a more “fluid” network relations in the other end. The study gave emphasis on and explored some of the qualitative aspects of the partnership relationship in practice. The empirical study shows that the notion of partnership described in the context of Swedish development cooperation applies to the collaboration agreement between Göteborg and NMMM. The partnership was, on one hand, an instrument to facilitate the move from development aid towards a more equal and broad co-operation relationship between the two cities. On the other hand, the Göteborg-NMMM partnership can be seen as an institution, in particular a value institution which was defined by shared values namely equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit. A culture of “dialogue” based on mutual “trust” was also a powerful tool in this partnership. Finally, the empirical study shows evidence that the partnership promotes acceptance and sustainability based on a peer-to-peer problem solving.
Acknowledgements

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NMNM</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUD</td>
<td>Municipal and Urban Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>Sida</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<td>PGU</td>
<td>Swedish Policy for Global Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>REC</td>
<td>Africa’s Regional Economic Communities</td>
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<td>ECDPM</td>
<td>European Centre for Development Policy Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLSa</td>
<td>South African Project Leader</td>
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<td>PLSw</td>
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<td>South African Project coordinator</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background
The concept of development aid and assistance has changed over time. The focus in the 1970s was aid to “underdeveloped” areas in the form of donor-driven projects, e.g. building schools and hospitals. The 1980s was dominated by various programme support and structural adjustment programmes (SAP) when donors’ focus shifted to macroeconomic issues linked to the African countries’ debt problem and economic crisis. However, after more than two decades of development aid, many African countries were still unable to free themselves from ‘aid dependency’ and acquire adequate level of self-sustained development. This situation concerning the methodology and effectiveness of development aid together with the “sea” of socio-political changes that occurred in the continent motivated Sweden to take initiative and proposed a ‘dialogue’ on a new aid relationship and post-structural adjustment agenda for Africa ten years ago. Development aid has been challenged by the term development cooperation with partner countries. The partnership discourse was thus introduced as a mode of operation in the international development cooperation arena. The concept of partnership expresses the long-term perspective of development cooperation and the value of equality between donor and recipient countries. This form of development cooperation with Africa has also been adopted by the EU Commission when it proposed a strategic partnership for security and development between the European Union and Africa for the next decade. The revitalised Swedish Africa Policy also stated that the aims of partnership embrace the idea of solidarity and enlightened self-interest. This means that support to Africa is in the long-run also support to all our common interests (Gov. communication:1997/98:122:81). The Commission for Africa also concluded that what we really need is a new kind of partnership between Africa and the ‘developed’ countries. This, in the commission’s point of view, means a development cooperation that is based on mutual respect and solidarity. The new kind of partnership is thus referred to by an increasing number of parties and stakeholders in development assistance. Sweden, in its capacity of donor country, has established several partnerships with countries in Africa by the beginning of the 21st century. The emergence of the partnership discourses among the multilateral agencies and organizations also brought expectations that this new direction in development cooperation would lead to a more equal and respectful relationship between the North and the South. However, partnership is a contested concept and the identification of a successful partnership even more. What does partnership really mean?
Has this language of “genuine” partnership, of equality and mutual respect really brought about changes into the reality of the old “donor-recipient relationship” and not just in the rhetorical level?

1.2 The objectives of the thesis and delimitation

Sweden has been involved in South Africa’s development for over three decades. Sweden’s unwavering support to democratization and the liberation movements in South Africa has been the foundation of a long-term relationship between the two countries. Today, more than a decade after the end of apartheid, South Africa is one of the richest countries in sub-Saharan Africa with an average economic growth rate of 3.5% during the period 1999-2005. It has the potential to take a lead in development initiatives in the new millennium. However, the country’s serious challenges remain according to the IMF:s annual country assessment in 2005 namely: the high rate of unemployment, the wealth disparities and the increasing incidence of HIV/Aids. In 1999, a Bi-National Commission, a political forum and unique platform for dialogue between Sweden and South Africa was founded. Development cooperation agreements were signed to support the municipality of Sol Plaatjie (Kimberley) and Nelson Mandela Metro (Port Elizabeth) which extended to 2004 and 2005 respectively. In 2003, Göteborg and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMP) signed a three-year partnership agreement which was supported by the Swedish International Development cooperation Agency (Sida). The two cities had started building ties, provided inspiration for one another and engaged in ‘partnership dialogues’ since 1999. The signing of an agreement for continued development collaboration in the spirit of partnership was therefore a natural and mutual decision from both sides. Sida defined partnership as a set of relationships between individuals, organizations and countries with shared views and defined roles, tasks, rights and obligations (Sida, 2005:82). The Göteborg-NMMP partnership aims to deepen and broaden the relationships between the two cities. The collaboration embraces partnership projects in six different sectors of society namely: Business, Arts and Culture, Tourism, Sport, Municipal and Urban Development (MUD) and the Tertiary Sector which refers to higher education and research. The Sport sector was not included in the partnership 2003-2005. This “cooperation with the municipalities is unique in that it is one of the few examples where Sida, with the approval of the South African government, is co-operating directly with a local authority” (Topham, S. et. al., 2005:40).
The objectives of this thesis are

• to explore the meanings of partnership in the context of Swedish Development Cooperation with Africa for the purpose of developing a conceptual understanding of this new kind of partnership
• to analyse and explain how this concept of partnership is manifested in practice in the Göteborg-NMMM partnership 2003-2005.

Some of the aspects of partnership which are often featured in development cooperation strategies, partnership documents and policies will be analysed using development studies and governance theories as well as theories on organizations. The empirical study and analysis based on the Göteborg-NMMM partnership will further seek to provide a practical understanding of the concept of partnership in order to enhance the meaning of partnership in development cooperation with Africa. Since I was involved in this partnership as the project leader in the tertiary sector 2003-2005, I am very much aware of the risks connected with subjectivity in this regard and is committed to minimize that risk. The purpose of this thesis is however not to give a thorough, comprehensive and all-encompassing analysis of the issues and problems connected with partnerships in international development cooperation. The study has its focus on the experiences of individuals in four different sectors involved in a specific type of partnership in practice mainly during the period 2003-2005.

1.3 The Methods and Materials
The methodological approach applied in this study is triangulation which consists of the following three methodological points:

(i)Literature Analysis: The materials consist of the European Union’s strategy for Africa, Sweden’s policy and strategies for Africa and in particular for South Africa, partnership guidelines, Göteborg-NMMM project reports, contracts, M. Eriksson-Baaz doctoral thesis (a postcolonial reading of identity in development aid) and a mix of articles on the Göteborg-NMMM partnership and other publications on Partnerships in the context of Swedish development cooperation with Africa. By reviewing what relevant stakeholders and researchers have said, debated and discussed about partnerships in the context of development cooperation with Africa in the past decade and by analysing it through the lenses of development studies and governance theories as
well as processes in organizations, this thesis will try to analyse and explore the meanings of partnership in order to develop a conceptual understanding of this new contemporary partnership in the context of Swedish development cooperation with Africa.

(ii) **In-depth interviews**: The in-depth interviews constitute the central part of the method of analysing the notion of partnership in practice. I chose to interview three types of key actors namely: the coordinators, the project leaders and representatives of key organizations (Sida, EU Commission, a South African manager). The partnership organization that was operational in 2003-2005 is composed of management committees in both cities, the 2 project coordinators, the 8 sector champions, the Sida Urban advisor in Port Elizabeth, and the project leaders in four sectors. Since the study is not an evaluation of the content of the projects, the selected persons for interviews were concentrated on the persons that have ‘counterparts’ and have worked together continuously during the period 2003-2005. The researcher aimed to interview all the project coordinators (2), 1 sector champion, 7 project leaders. I asked the project coordinators for a list of the persons who worked together as ‘counterparts’ in three years in the four sectors that were operational in 2003, namely Tourism, Arts and Culture, Municipal Urban Development and the Tertiary sector. (In the Business sector which is the fifth sector, the partnership initiatives did not succeed due mainly to huge structural differences.). Two of the above did not respond to the request for interview (namely the Sector champion and one project leader). The project coordinators from both cities have the overall responsibility of supporting and following-up the progress of the different projects in the partnership. They can highlight the issues that apply to the partnership as a whole. I only chose to interview one sector champion and this person was chosen at random. The project coordinators informed me that the sector champions did not have a principal role in 2003-2005 when the project leaders and focus areas were already identified. I chose to interview the project leaders because that is the lowest level which is coordinated in the organizational structure and these are the people who worked closely together with their ‘counterparts’. Six of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted for approximately an hour and a half each. Three of these face-to-face interviews were conducted in Port Elizabeth, South Africa in March, 2006. Of the remaining five interviews, four were telephone interviews and were approximately 30-45 minutes long and one is a combination of telephone interviews and email correspondence. The questions to the project leaders revolved around their
understanding and concrete experiences of the partnership relationship, their motives for participation, the implementation process, modes of communication, their views on what the important aspects of partnership are, the outcomes, the difficulties and challenges they encountered as well as their visions regarding their specific partnership projects. The interview with the project coordinators revolved around their experiences in coordinating the partnership projects in the different sectors as a whole, defining roles and responsibilities, important guidelines and procedures, the outcomes and their assessment criteria for the different projects. Furthermore, a South African manager, a Sida representative and an EU Commission staff were also interviewed. These persons were selected for strategic reasons. The Sida representative was a strategic person because she was involved in initiating the Göteborg-NMMM partnership in 1999. She also participated in the policy dialogues together with the political representatives from both cities. The South African manager was my counterpart’s former manager and was involved in identifying the focus areas. The EU Commission staff was involved in formulating the new EU strategy for Africa wherein partnership has a key role. The interview questions for the Sida representative and the EU staff will include their understanding of the meaning and aspects of partnership which embraces equality and ownership issues, together with questions on policy dialogues, motives for adopting the new kind of partnership, and their criteria for success. This empirical study of a specific partnership programme between two cities practically intends to analyse as to what extent has partnership realised the expectations and objectives of the actors and stakeholders involved, what kind of time frames, conditions and environment are necessary for partnerships to be established, as well as to what extent has partnership been able to contribute to solutions and new approaches to shared challenges and problems.

The interviews were semi-structured. I focused the interviews on some specific topics but I also let the respondents talk quite freely if they want to elaborate on certain issues.

(iii) My own direct observations and concrete experiences as project leader for a development cooperation project in the tertiary sector of the partnership 2003-2005:

My concrete experiences include among others participating in dialogues regarding the initiation of the project as well as defining objectives and content, the design, planning and the implementation of the project in collaboration with my South African partner, writing of joint reports and journal article, conference presentations together with my NMMM counterpart, planning the visits to Port Elizabeth as well as the NMMM:s visit
to Göteborg. During the period 2003-2006, I also participated in visits, attended workshops and worked with the team in Port Elizabeth once a year. Furthermore, I have experienced working intensely with my South African counterpart for over three years. In the light of these experiences, I chose to focus on the processes involved in establishing and working in partnership in an international context. I believe that my position, gender and life-experiences have shaped this study. At the same time I, through the course of this work have also consciously adopted an open-mind and the approach was based on a specific theoretical framework. I let the respondents talk freely without positioning myself, and they did not ask me any questions on my views during the course of the interviews. They did the talking most of the time. The majority of them have not heard of me before the interview and many did not even have the opportunity to see me in person during the interview. There is of course a possibility that the interviews were influenced by what their perceptions are and their understanding of my position. I also want to point out that the experiences and reflections expressed in the study are not fixed but were provided with meanings along the processes involved and were now remembered in retrospect. The analysis and interpretations presented in the thesis could therefore be seen as relevant only in relation to this particular context.

Finally, the three different methods presented above will be utilised and together contribute to form the basis of analysis in order to develop a conceptual and practical understanding of partnership in international development cooperation (Esaiasson et al, 2005: 253). Through analysing the patterns of ideas, experiences and observations from these three different frames of reference, the study will aim to discover possible generalizations as a basis of understanding or predictions on the “what”, the “so what”, and the “then what” of the concept of partnership within the context of Swedish international development cooperation.

1.4 Organisation of the Study

Chapter 1: This chapter gives the background, the objectives of the thesis and the methods and materials that will be used in the study.

Chapter 2: The theoretical framework of the study is presented. This chapter situates partnership in the governance discourse and presents the two approaches and perspectives that will be used to analyse the notion of partnership.

Chapter 3: The first part focuses on the discourses on development over time which has shaped aid relationships. It is in this background that the partnership discourse emerged for more than a decade ago. The second part explores the concept of partnership in the
revitalised Swedish Africa Policy and the new EU strategy for Africa. The aim is to develop a conceptual understanding of what the new partnership is in the context of Swedish development cooperation.

Chapter 4. The empirical study analyses and explains how the concept of partnership, studied in the last chapter, is manifested in practice in the Göteborg-NMMM partnership 2003-2005 in order to develop a practical understanding of the concept of partnership.

2. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“Aid is a relationship between two parties – a donor and a recipient. The effectiveness of development co-operation therefore depends on the quality of this relationship. It is a complex relationship characterized by huge differences in the terms and conditions by which the parties collaborate with each other.”

Carlsson and Wohlgemuth, 2000:1

2.1 Situating Partnership in the Governance discourse

Partnerships, in the sense of “collaborating” to achieve a common goal are often established between various institutions and organizations. The concept of partnership also underlines the possibilities of collaboration between a number of actors and stakeholders from the different policy levels and spheres of society, crossing institutionalized boundaries. Partnership is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. The questions of the “what”, the “why” and the “how” of partnerships are relevant issues that have been investigated in different contexts and relative practices. While many actors advocate the notion of partnership, they are not in full agreement as to what precisely and wholly differentiates partnership from other forms of policy and inter-organizational collaboration. One way of conceptualising partnership is to think of it as one point on a continuum, with the formally defined contractual relationship at one end, and the looser and more ‘fluid network relationship’ at the other (Benington,J., Geddes, M., 2001:2). Although the phenomenon of partnership is complex, and its practice and governing principles are very much influenced by the partnership goals and the organizations involved, it is however necessary to develop a set of generic characteristics that is applicable to all partnerships. The collection of these generic characteristics of partnership arrangements investigated in a variety of partnership agreements would according to Guy Peters (1998:12-13) include the following: (i) partnerships involves two or more actors (ii) each actor is principal which means that they can bargain on their own behalf and are committed to the arrangement (iii) a continuing relationship (iv) each actor
contributes something to the partnership (v) shared responsibility for the outcomes of the activities.

The notion of partnership has also been considered as a defining element in new patterns of local governance, as it reflects the shift of ideas and practices from government to governance (Pierre, J., 1998:5). Although the term globalization is still contested, it is nevertheless sometimes referred to as the current form of development (Hettne, 2005:36). The process of globalisation has brought about new social, economic and political patterns in our midst. Security, justice and sustainable development are simply not exclusive national issues in an interconnected world. Problems connected with poverty reduction, social exclusion, conflict resolution, HIV/AIDS are but a few examples. The problems and challenges that emerge in a globalised and an ever-changing environment are diverse and complex that it has been recognised by both academic and policy literatures that neither the State nor the market can provide adequate models for governance (Benington, 2001:216). Complexity theory suggests that for organizations to survive in a fast-changing and unpredictable environment, they should constantly engage in improvisation, co-adaptation, regeneration, experimentation and time-pacing (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998). According to Ashby’s “Law of requisite variety” from 1956, it is also imperative to develop structures and processes to match the complexity and diversity of the surrounding world in which they operate. Partnerships can bring together different actors, with different perspectives, knowledge and comparative advantages in skills and resources, to work on shared goals. Partnerships, both horizontal and vertical, can thus be seen as an element of governance that could address the goals of global development.

There are many approaches to the understanding of the concept of partnership. I have nevertheless chosen to view partnership from the following two perspectives: the instrumentalist’s perspective and the institutionalist’s perspective.

(i) Instrumentalism: Partnerships can be viewed as an instrument of governance. The shift of the analytical focus from government to governance can simply mean that the focus is now turned to the values and processes employed and less to the institutions. According to Stoker (1998:5), the concept of governance is wider than that of government because governance also takes into account the processes that occurred in the interaction between government and society. Furthermore, he argued that in the international context, the notion of governance is used to capture the process whereby
nation states collaborate in a way that they could enhance their national interests. “Central to the idea of governance is a more or less continuous process of interaction” (Stoker 1998:40). Partnership is one of the appropriate instruments that could be utilised in shifting the focus from government to governance, an instrument to influence society. It has characteristics that are desirable in certain political situations and for ‘solving’ certain policy problems (Peters, 1998:20). Partnership can be negotiated very formally or ‘loosely’ and discretely without drawing much attention, as well as it can allow programmes to avoid very bureaucratic processes that could require both time and economic resources. However a disadvantage to this lack of visibility is that it also makes accountability difficult (ibid.). Partnership can be chosen as an instrument if the preconditions are adequate to ensure that the establishment will predict the achievement of the goals and the perpetuation of the relationship once it is established. Before choosing partnership as an instrument for governance, it is however necessary to take a closer look at some variables that could be taken into considerations as preconditions such as the level of the mutuality of interests and exchange between the actors, the prospective participants’ motivation for participating and how compatible are these motivations to the incentives that are embedded in the partnership relationship.

Organizations form partnerships not only to enhance outcomes but also to produce synergistic rewards (Brinkerhoff, J., 2002:3). A combination of perspectives, skills and resources can yield creativity and unimaginable win-win solutions (ibid.). However, collaboration also requires a conducive environment and motivation to thrive. The concept of dialogue, as a tool for establishing partnership and the concept of trust, as a basic prerequisite for a fruitful dialogue are often emphasized in partnership discourses in development cooperation. Establishing firm partnerships therefore takes time because trust is often both time-consuming and person-specific (Olsson and Wohlgemuth, 2003:12). The process of trust development, the different approaches and dilemmas in the trust process, have therefore practical implications on the partnership relationship. And yet for more than a decade now, trust (which remains a “fragile” and “elusive” resource in many organizations in a democratic society) has been a topic in the centre of scientific research on organizations (Kramer, R., Cook, K., 2004:1). Trust is often conceptualized in terms of choice – in other words, the trustor’s decision-making process (Kramer, P., Cook, K. 2004:243.). Two approaches were identified: (i) the rational, which is based on risks evaluation and conscious calculations of advantages and (ii) the relational, which takes into consideration the social aspects, and where choices are more based on affections and intuitions rather than calculations (ibid.).
The development of trust between parties that are geographically separated and has little opportunity for face-to-face interaction is a special characteristic of the Göteborg-NMMM partnership. The parties have to rely heavily on communication through the use of technology, mainly email correspondence and through telephone to some extent. This difference in location also implies a tangible difference in organizational structures and cultural contexts. This ‘distance’ between the trustor and the trustee may affect the development of trust if the ‘distance’ means reduced information for the trustor about the trustee and the situation. The quality and modes of communication between the participants are thus crucial if it has to compensate for the geographical disadvantage.

The development of trust is connected to learning, and learning requires a theory of knowledge, which includes in this case perceptions, value, understanding and even emotions (Nootenboom, B, Six, F., 2003:12). There is evidence that trust changes over time as the trustor learns more about the trustee by gathering more information, gaining a better understanding of the situation and updating perceptions (Kramer 1999; Rosseau et al. 1998; Lewicki and Bunker 1996). A successful dialogue can only be possible if there exists mutual trust because trust yields honesty and transparency. A dialogue should therefore preferably take place between equal partners, which implies a special problem within the context of development cooperation. The relationship between participants in dialogues in development cooperation is always tainted by asymmetry whether it is in terms of economic resources or in terms of capacity and knowledge. There is a built-in ‘power relations’ in the donor-recipient relationship. Partners interacting within development cooperation should be committed to pursue dialogues for the purpose of understanding to help bring about changes that will lead to sustainable development.

The prototypes of interaction within relationships according to classical authors in sociology are based on differentiating between (i) a relationship between equals vs. an authority relationship and (ii) community vs. Society (Landenberg, S., 2003:38). A meaningful dialogue is the methodology of ownership in development programmes. In the 1990s, many explanations were pointed out for ineffectiveness of aid and among the critics who still have faith in sub-Saharan Africa, the lack of local ownership has been considered as the missing link (Sidibe, M., 1997:203). Ownership and partnership are thus very closely related in international development cooperation. The question is: Can partnership be an instrument to facilitate a move from development aid to a more equal cooperation relationship?
(ii) **Institutionalism:** Another approach to examine partnership is institutionalism. Fundamental to the institutional approach is that “there are structural and organizational aspects of social life that affects human behaviours and decisions more than the characteristics of individual decision-makers” (Peters, 1998:15). Partnership has structural and organizational properties that are similar to institutions. Partnerships as institutions can be interpreted in the following possible ways (although there are other possibilities): (i) value institutionalism which means that shared values tend to define the institution (ii) rational institutionalism that focuses attention more on the rules that shape the behaviour of the members of the institutions rather than the values that permeate them (iii) historical institutionalism, an approach where the conditions and ideas that are fundamental to the founding of the institution are also used to understand the institution’s subsequent behaviour and policies (ibid).

Situating the phenomenon of partnership under a magnifying lens discloses a whole universe of components and multi-dimensional issues. The notion of partnership can thus be linked to a wide-range of scientific research areas in both political and social sciences.

### 3. THE NOTION OF PARTNERSHIP in DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION with AFRICA

#### 3.1 Background: Development thinking over time and Africa

Our natural starting point is to ask the question ‘What does the donor community mean by development in development cooperation?’ Although a comprehensive definition of development can never be established, the idea of development and development thinking has been discussed over centuries. Terminologies like the ‘Third World’, ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries can be found in many literatures in development studies. Different development ideologies and approaches have been presented, rediscovered and debated in the course of time. Some of the theoretical cores of development ideas and paradigms that have shaped development cooperation in Africa are therefore discussed below.

#### 3.1.1 Modernization.

The age of development was inaugurated together with the introduction of “underdeveloped” areas as a synonym to “economically backward” countries in 1949.

“...we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas...”

-President Truman, Inaugural Address 1949
It was in this context that the process of development was seen as an evolution from a stage of underdevelopment which was defined as development that was incomplete, and the analogy between development and growth was established. W. Rostow’s work, “The Stages of Economic Growth” played an important political role in the 1960s. For Rostow, the main thing is to move from tradition to modernity (Rist, 2002:96). This theory of growth is based on the assumption that all nations travel the same developmental path. In practice, development as modernization in development cooperation was very much similar to westernization, in the sense that it is imperative that the ‘underdeveloped’ countries should imitate the developed western role-models. Many western donors adopted the modernization theory under the assumption that problems of poverty and human development would be solved by adequate investments in physical capital and infrastructure (Haynes, 2005:6) so the developing countries can follow the Western model of industrialization. Implementation of donor-driven projects in the 1970s was an expression of this approach. It seemed, that in the same way as colonization was believed to be a matter of duty by a considerable part of the civilized world, decolonization and modernization of ‘underdeveloped’ areas were seen as a collaboration project for the western donor communities. Many heads of developing African states accepted then to be classified as ‘underdeveloped’ in order to benefit from ‘aid’ that would lead to development (Rist, 2002:79). There is a contradiction between the discourse of partnership and the discourse of evolutionary growth in which the ‘partner’ is seen as in a different stage of development (Baaz-Eriksson, M., 2002:209).

3.1.2 Dependency school and ‘Another Development’.

While the modernization school assumed that the cause of ‘underdevelopment’ can be identified through internal factors (e.g. lack of technology, overpopulation), Paul Baran’s work implied that underdevelopment in the developing countries was a continuous process and was a result of external factors. He pointed out that colonization and imperialist exploitation were the reasons why nations were deprived of their potential surplus (Jafee, D., 1998:155). In 1966, A.G. Frank completed this logical argument in his thesis “The development of underdevelopment” through the notion of ‘metropoles’ and ‘satellites’ which formed the basis for arguments for the dependency school. Frank pointed out examples like the destructive effects of slave trade on African society. Poverty was seen as a structure rather than a particular stage (Haynes, 2005:34). There is no common path towards development and at its worst, the dependency theory means
that once a ‘centre’ of states is developed, it would be impossible for the other states in the ‘periphery’ to achieve the same status (Calvert, P., 2005:53). A proposed strategy for the developing countries was to detach themselves from the structure of exploitation, for example through import substitution industry. Baran advocated a solution through the implementation of extensive state interventions to promote state-owned industrialization. These development ideas focused development cooperation in Africa to institutional adjustments and reorientation of internal policies. The idea is that the State should play a central role in the prevention of inequalities through land reforms, development of import substitution industry and a better distribution of investment. It was in the background of the dependency school that the term self-reliance was introduced in the development discourse. The Arusha Declaration of 1967 was an early example of the strategy of self-reliance. Pres. Nyerere urged his fellow-Tanzanians to rely upon their own forces in order to tackle the problems of ‘underdevelopment’ (Rist, 2002:127). Nyerere focused on rural development based on the ideas of traditional values and responsibilities. The strategy did not lead to an economically independent Tanzania due to external factors and the difficulties of action based on tradition and at the same time to modernize production by changing technology (Rist, 2002:133.). The strategy of self-reliance was however never forgotten and was one of the alternative trends that were summarized as the concept of ‘Another Development’, which was popularized by Dag Hammarskjöld in his report “What now?” at the Seventh Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 1975. ‘Another Development’ was defined as “need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and based on structural transformation” (Nerfin 1977:10). ‘Another development’ urged donors to view poverty in other terms besides economics (meaning capital and investment). The report also broke new grounds by questioning the effects of social and economic processes to the environment and by “directing international aid to countries that are committed to reduce inequalities and respect human rights” (Rist, 2002:155). Needless to say, the flame of environmental consciousness that was ignited by ‘Another development’ led to the Declaration of Agenda 21 at the Rio conference in 1992 when over 180 countries of the North and South swore cooperation and commitment to the principle of sustainable development. Last but not the least, it proposed that development has to arise ‘endogenously’ from inside the developing society, from its culture and cannot be reduced to imitation of ‘developed’ societies (ibid.). These words highlighted the necessity of listening attentively to African voices, their own dreams and what they consider is the authentic expression of their true self.
3.1.3 Structural adjustment programmes and neoliberalism.

The oil crisis in the 1970s left numerous developing countries in Africa with enormous debt burdens. In the end of the 20th century, the term neoliberalism was used to describe the dominating policies advocating economic policies characterized by the free market and the privatisation of the state-owned industries in the 1980s and 1990s. Between 1980-1989, 36 sub-Saharan countries signed for 241 different loans with the the Bretton Woods institutions (van de Walle, 2001:7). Supported by the USA, the Bretton Woods institutions designed structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and encouraged these countries to implement. These structural adjustments include a set of ‘free market’ economic policy reforms, privatisation, reducing government expenditures by lifting food and agricultural subsidies and by cutting budget allocations to public services. SAPs also demanded trade policy reforms that imply ‘openness’ of African countries to the world. The neo-liberal approach to openness required that state restrictions on imports and exports to be lifted (Thomson, 2005:184). With the introduction of these programmes, the African educational sector experienced the sharpest cut in resources in 1980-1985 (Cheru, 2002:5). In both Ghana and Zambia, it is said that the structural adjustment was the major cause of political conflict between the state and the labour movement in the 1980s. The third decade of development aid was therefore governed with donor conditionalities and forced structural adjustment programmes. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, a new concept of development ['post-development'] based on sustainability, democracy and human rights started to take shape. A new development discourse was introduced, the ‘good governance’ doctrine was introduced in the African agenda and ‘democracy’, characterized by transparency, legitimacy and accountability, was identified as a necessary precondition for sustainable growth in the African continent. However, for Africa, the question is whose democracy and the main challenge is to simultaneously pursue democratization and economic development by making economic development a process of democratization.

3.1.4 Globalisation and Global development

Globalisation is a widely used but debated concept which normally refers to the process of integrating economies around the world. The IMF (2000) identified the following aspects of globalisation: trade, capital movement, movement of people and the spread of knowledge and technology. The process of globalisation is reducing the boundary between the national and the international. The idea on integration to global economy
focuses primarily on external trade. Africa has shown very low level of participation in external trade [less than 2% of the World Trade]. In that respect, one could say that some regions, e.g. East Asia, have become more integrated than others. However, economic performance in the continent varies from state to state. In 2003, the annual Globalization Index of the US Journal, *Foreign Policy* ranked countries according to their performance with regard to, among others trade/foreign direct investment (FDI), travel/telephone calls, number of memberships in international organizations/embassies and information technology (IT) and for the first time included some African states with Botswana, Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia, Senegal, Kenya and Egypt on the top (Shaw, T. 2005:258). Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal and South Africa are the only sub-Saharan states that have good ‘credit ratings’ and are aspiring to be ‘second world’ countries (ibid.). With regard to trade, the issue for Africa is not whether to trade but how and on what terms (African Dev. Bank, 2004:166). Africa needs both regional and international partnership agreements to strengthen its capabilities for integration to the international trade and to recognize Africa as an equal commercial partner. Otherwise, future strategy to integrate Africa would not be effective if they would have to face huge barriers in the forms of external tariffs and the North would persist to close its markets to African competition. The debate on globalisation and the relationship between North and South has placed WTO negotiations into focus, free and fair trade into development cooperation and trading partnerships. The picture of Africa in the last decade of the 20th century includes extensive corruption, widespread ‘poverty’, visible collapse in human development, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, civil wars and violent conflicts, degradation of the environment and continuous violation of human rights. In this context, development assistance has embraced humanitarian interventions, e.g. prevent and manage conflict, post-conflict reconstruction with economic recovery and growth.

In the background of globalisation, development can be viewed at present as “the increasing capacity to make rational use of natural and human resources for social ends” (Mittelman and Pasha 1997:25) and “the qualitative dimension of global governance, encompassing a number of basic human values is what global development is all about” (Hettne, B., 2005:43). This development idea therefore calls for a global partnership. In September 2000, the UN declared the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as a common agenda for the world’s nations. The eight millennium goals embrace developing a global partnership for development and aims to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty, improve health, ensure universal primary education as well as to promote peace, human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability (UN website, 2006). To
strengthen development assistance to Africa and to achieve the UN Millennium goals, a policy coherence for development across all sectors is essential. Policy coherence means that the agreed goal for development is to be included in all political areas. It means promoting the reinforcement of policy actions across all sectors and agencies to avoid contradictions and efforts at cross-purposes. Partnership is the recommended mode of cooperation within the context of international development assistance.

3.2 The concept of partnership in the revitalised Swedish strategy for Africa

3.2.1 Sweden’s policy for Global Development
In December 2003, Sweden adopted the Policy for Global Development (PGU). The PGU proposed shared responsibility and a common objective for all policy areas, e.g. trade, security as well as development cooperation. The overall goal of the PGU is: “to contribute to an equitable and sustainable global development”. The PGU and thus even development cooperation are based on two perspectives: the rights perspective and the perspective of the poor (Skr 2004/05:4). The above objective and perspectives give a strong focus on poverty reduction where poverty is viewed as ‘holistic, dynamic, multi-dimensional and context specific’ (Sida, 2002:7-15). It also stresses the people’s individual and collective rights, their own views and experiences of being ‘poor’. The role of development cooperation is to contribute to processes that will lead to poverty alleviation. The PGU identified eight essential building blocks in abolishing poverty which were grouped into three categories namely: core values, sustainable development and other essential elements (ibid.). The core values include respect for human rights, democracy and good governance as well as gender equality. Although these elements are all necessary, they are given different priorities and importance in development cooperation depending on the given situation of the country in question. In line with the PGU, the new main objective for Swedish development cooperation is ‘to help create conditions that will enable the poor people to improve their quality of life’ (Sida, 2005:5). The main focus is the ‘poorest’ countries. Furthermore, the partner countries’ ownership and responsibility for the development process is crucial. Cooperation is always based on the assumption that Sweden can contribute to support the poor to change their lives through their own efforts (Sida, 2005:16).
3.2.2 Sweden’s Policy for Africa and a new Partnership

By the turn of the century, Africa finds itself in a transition phase due to socio-economic and political developments in the continent and to the rapid globalisation process in the surrounding world. Sweden has had cooperation relations with African countries for decades and is aware of the fact that Africa plays an important role as an integrated part of the global community. Africa’s deforestation and desertification may affect climate changes and global ecological security; threats to biodiversity has serious implications for agriculture and technological development in every country and Africa’s marginalization in external trade could have serious economic and political consequences not only for Africa but for the world as a whole (Gov. Communication 1997/98:122., 1998:87-88).

With these new points of departure, the Swedish Government submitted a communication to the Parliament proposing a revitalisation of Sweden’s Policy for Africa for the 21st century. The Government proposed among others support to African-led processes towards democracy and sustainable development, developing partnerships between Africa and the surrounding world as well as strengthening the long-term contacts between Sweden and Africa (ibid.). The notion of partnership was introduced as the key to the new co-operation relationship between Sweden and Africa. The process of change and lessons learned from the past decade of development cooperation call for a strong need to bring about a qualitatively new co-operating relationship between Sweden and Africa (Gov. Communication 1997/98:122., 1998:80). The concept of Partnership is central to the whole strategy and policy for Africa. It also requires new patterns of behaviour on both sides of the aid relationship (Havnerik, K., Arkadie van, B., 1996:21).

Let us therefore take a closer look to what the Swedish Government mean by this new partnership relationship.

The concept of Partnership in the Policy: Sida defined partnership as a set of relationships between individuals, organizations and countries with shared views and defined roles, tasks, rights and obligations. According to the revitalised Africa Policy (Gov. Communication 1997/98:122:80), partnership should be seen as an attitude, an “aspiration for enhanced equality in relationships” . Furthermore, it is recognized as a form of cooperation based on shared values, shared goals and mutual respect. It should be distinguished by equality between partners and its qualitative aspects include a code of conduct such as openness and clarity in communication with regard to values and interest as well as transparency of agenda and mutuality of need (Gov. Communication 1997/98:122.,1998:81). The government admits that the “inequality that is inherent in the aid relationship cannot be eliminated at once but it can be tackled in various ways” (Gov.
Communication 1997/98,1998:7). Mats Karlsson identified almost a decade ago, the following five aspects that are crucial to partnership: subject-to-subject attitude, being explicit about values, transparency of interests, clear contractual standards and equality of capacity. Partnership also embraces an increased management of objectives and result orientation, “a humble, listening attitude with respect for African assumption of responsibility and awareness of the local environment” (Gov. Communication 1997/98:122., 1998:81). The concept of partnership expresses a long-term perspective in development cooperation. Partnership expresses the intention to continue the relationship beyond development assistance, a broader kind of partnership. In order to promote this new kind of partnership, the revitalised Policy for Africa gives emphasis to the following methods in development cooperation between governments:

(i) **let Africans take the lead**: developments should be based on their planning and priorities
(ii) **local ownership**: support each other in building capacity in order to take control and responsibility for the development processes and activities
(iii) **improved local backing and participation**: development issues should be legitimised in an open national political process with the participation of the government’s top management and authorities
(iv) **well-developed sector and budget support**: better framework and mechanisms for coordinating support administration, which is a burdensome task for African administration
(v) **improved co-ordination**: well-developed interactions between partners in co-ordinating forums and increased participation of donors in consultative dialogues and decision-making meetings
(vi) **simplified procedures**: develop a common procedure for reporting, regulations, payments, accounting and local systems that are acceptable to a majority of donors
(v) **contractual clarity and transparency**: clarity and transparency in defining goals, reciprocal rights and obligations as well as monitoring and evaluation schemes
(vi) **increased policy coherence**: all political and policy sectors should evolve in one context
(vii) **rewards for progress**: introduce measurable objectives and continued aid for its attainment
(viii) **extraordinary debt-relief inputs for certain countries**: a need for reforms and debt relief for certain countries to give them a realistic chance to start a partnership relationship


Partnership is the recommended mode of co-operation and dialogue is identified as the key tool. Establishing firm partnerships takes time. Trust, a basic prerequisite for a fruitful dialogue is often time-consuming and person-specific (Olsson and Wohlgemuth, 2003:12). Many factors, from change of political power to disagreement on the roles of
the partners can affect the partnership (Sida, 2005:23). Partnerships cannot include all countries but a successful partnership is considered “to represent a qualitative step towards contribution to poverty reduction in Africa” (Gov. Communication 1997/98:122:85). From Sweden’s point of view, the notion of partnership is therefore not only seen as an instrument to manage development assistance programmes but more as a value-driven institution. It has been underlined in several occasions by Sweden’s political leaders that partnership is a change in attitude from subject-to-object to a more equal subject-to-subject attitude characterized by a culture of dialogue. Partnership embraces a list of qualitative aspects as well as an ethical and moral dimension. Furthermore, remaining engaged, even in ‘difficult partnerships’ is also motivated not only by the ethos of solidarity but also by enlightened self-interest, the acknowledgement that we are interconnected and recognize the need for each other’s efforts towards an equitable global development.

3.2.3 Dialogue in development cooperation:
Since dialogue is crucial to the partnership relationship, let us take a closer look and revisit what has been said and practiced regarding the concept of dialogue in the context of Sweden’s development cooperation with Africa. Sida stresses that dialogues on poverty should have a holistic perspective, and requires humility, respect and frankness especially when it is complicated by the power of money and at the same time the necessity of communicating Swedish priorities and Sida’s stand on different issues (Sida, 2002: 9). Dialogue in development cooperation can be understood from different perspectives and points of departure. Here are some of the recent voices from actors in development cooperation (Olsson and Wohlgemuth, 2003):

-Gus Edgren, the former State Secretary and Sweden’s ambassador to Vietnam, started by viewing dialogue as an instrument for learning and appreciation by stressing that the purpose of dialogue is not to have advantage or impose one’s will on the other. The dialogue is therefore an interaction between equals and open-minded individuals whose goal is not to resolve a conflict of interest. The latter is what he called a negotiation, a process which is different from a dialogue. He argued that there is a difference between the process of trying to reach a common vision and trying to defeat the position of the other person.

-Carlos Lopes of the UNDP continued by underlining the importance of participation. In a policy dialogue, partners are supposed to listen and to participate. He pointed out that learning and capacity development are necessary preconditions to a constructive and
meaningful policy dialogue. Furthermore, he also lifted the importance of motivation to participate and an atmosphere of fair dealings with regard to decision-making. He also believes that it is essential that sufficient time should be allotted to the process. Last but not the least, the search for a ‘win-win dialogue’ starts by identifying and addressing the challenges such as understanding development and recognizing the asymmetrical relationship in development aid.

-Hendrik van der Heijden, the director of Geomar International, focuses his attention to making policy dialogues more effective. Among the lessons learned from the 1990s, he asserted that imposing policy reform programmes from the outside is an ineffective approach and usually short-lived. It is also advisable not to link policy dialogues to provisions of financial assistance. He meant that in many cases, policy discussions tend to be directed at satisfying the donors so they will release development funds. He urged donors to focus the policy dialogues on the efforts that developing countries are exerting towards self-financed development and poverty reduction through genuine ownership of their economic development programmes and policies.

-Margaretha Ringström, a former expert from the Swedish Church, started by saying that dialogue seen as an ‘exchange of views’ [according to the dictionary], implies the need for mutuality and sharing. It also demanded openness and honesty. She asserted that partnership without genuine dialogue is unthinkable. Partnership and genuine dialogue, she meant is possible in a relationship that is based on respect, honesty, transparency and mutual accountability, and free from the power of money. She concluded with a didactic poem that expresses the necessary conditions for a true dialogue which stated that we have to learn how to listen to each other, understand each other’s dreams of a better world, make our dreams into reality, together we have power and each one of us has a responsibility. Indeed, she said that dialogue is essential in every human relationship and at every stage of development cooperation.

3.3 The notion of partnership in the new EU strategy for Africa

The European Council adopted a new EU Strategy for Africa in December, 2005 with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as the primary objective together with the promotion of sustainable development, security and good governance in Africa; a strategy of the entire European Union member states for the whole of Africa (EU Commission, 2005). Furthermore, it also stated that the relationship between the two continents is to be governed by the basic principles of equality, partnership and ownership; a relationship in which a deepened culture of dialogue is crucial. Dialogue is
therefore identified as the key tool and the purpose for action is to work in partnership with the African countries.

### 3.3.1 Equality, Partnership and Ownership

“As we enter a new era in EU-Africa relations, it is time to reinforce the basic principles that govern this relationship, most prominently equality, partnership and ownership. While these principles are not new, their sense, significance and implications have changed with developments in the external political and economic contexts.  

- Commission for European communities, 2005

The emphasis on equality in the EU-Africa relationship can be seen as an expression of disavowing paternalism and changing the power-relations between ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ in development assistance. The new enlarged European Union and the emergence of the African Union (AU) and Africa’s Regional Economic Communities (RECs) call for mutual recognition, mutual respect and the definition of mutual collective interests for both continents. In the Commission’s point of view, the concept of equality implies these three aspects. This notion of equality expresses the act of recognizing and respecting Africa as one entity, with its own political, economic, and natural resources and can contribute to a fulfilment of a common vision of global development. The term Partnership here means a more balanced relationship that implies that the two continents are equal political and commercial partners which means that the relationship not only includes development assistance but also “broad, concrete, and constructive political dialogue” (EU Commission, 2005:19). In the context of development cooperation, Europe is committed to assist Africa achieve its goal of a “peaceful, prosperous and democratic” (ibid.) Africa through partnership.

*How about equality between partners...?*

“...it is important to understand that partnership is a process... the goal is to reach a ‘full-partnership’ relationship [...] and in the end a “none-aid” relationship... the process takes time depending on the partner countries’ capacities. Some countries are ‘weak’ in terms of capacity, in the sense that they are working to reach the same ‘human rights standard’ but still needs support to strengthen their capacities,[...] development cooperation is based on the partner countries’ own priorities and we assist them to implement their own national development strategies...but the aim is to engage in full-partnership.”

The above statement underlines that partnership is a *continuous process* towards what was described as “full-partnership”, which was defined as the state when partners have shared vision and standard with regard to the essential elements. In the Cotonou Agreement, these essential elements are respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. The statement above also stressed that the cooperation is based on the partner’s priorities. In the language of development aid actors, the term donorship is now
transformed to ownership. The focus shifted from the donor-led implementations to recipient-responsibility with the partner-country taking the lead to control and execute the programme activities. The former Swedish State secretary Mats Karlsson\(^9\) stated that there really is a need for a change of attitude, an attitude of full respect for the other which he called “subject-to-subject” attitude. With this insight, I believe he meant that the old “donor-recipient” relationship was dominated by a “subject-to-object” attitude which is not compatible with the notion of partnership. In these words, he embedded the conviction that we may possess different levels of capacities or skills in the implementation of the projects but we certainly have equal capacity to analyse and reflect on the terms of the partnership agreement and on the processes involved.

In partnership, genuine ownership has been recognized by the respondent as one of the key preconditions for sustainability or sustainable development. Coherence was also mentioned in the interview as a key principle in the strategy. It is important that all the other political sectors contribute and not contradict development assistance efforts.

And what about ownership?

“[… in concrete terms, with regard to development assistance, this means that we assist the developing countries to strengthen their local capacities and support their efforts to implement and sustain their own poverty reduction strategies […]”

The above statements from the EU Commission expert recognizes that ownership considerations cannot be imposed from the outside but should start with the partner countries core activities and priorities. The statements also express that strengthening the partner’s local capacities\(^{14}\) to implement and sustain development is intended to assist the African country to reach the status of ‘equal partner’. ‘Equal partners’, I argue must imply that Africa is an equal partner not only in development issues but also in trade and in the political arena, in all the different spheres of international relations. The newly revised Cotonou Agreement, a comprehensive 20-year global partnership agreement between Africa - West Indies - Pacific and the European Community, clearly defines perspectives that combine these three dimensions in its so-called five pillars\(^8\) (EU website/Cotonou, 2006). This partnership agreement is a result of dialogues wherein the participating countries together defined their priorities and shared goals with regard to development, trade and politics, how these will be achieved, the different forms in which the dialogues will take place, fundings and the principles that will govern the development cooperation. Special emphasis on the key role of the political dialogue was also spelled out in the agreement. The partnership also promotes and encourages the
participation of non-government actors and the involvement of the civil society in the implementation of projects and programmes. This strategy is making use of the notion of partnership to bring about collaboration across institutional boundaries, both horizontally and vertically, to bring together different types of actors and resources in the programme.

The Cotonou agreement is a well-defined and formal contractual partnership agreement, defining roles and responsibilities, together with the implementation, monitoring and evaluation schemes. It is therefore an example of a partnership situated on the more formal contractual side of the continuum of inter-organizational collaboration.

*How do you come into an agreement...?*

“...To get there, dialogues are pursued in the partnership for example, the Cotonou Agreement. The agreement defined dialogues in different levels. The first and central one is the political dialogue…then we have the policy and programming level …the political dialogue includes the essential elements such as respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. Good governance is another fundamental element. The needs and the country-owned strategies of the partners are identified in the dialogues. We put forward our priorities but we never impose...we are moving from the old ‘donor-conditionality’... our priorities regarding the ‘essential elements’ can of course be interpreted as conditionality but we engage in dialogue and it is a process... In the dialogue, we try to understand and identify ways in order to strengthen the partner countries’ local capacities. If it comes up that there are clear indication of violations of human rights, then we would in line with the Cotonou Agreement launch consultation process with a view to identify appropriate measures to be implemented by the partner country. It is only in very extreme cases, when the partner refuses to implement measures agreed in a joint consultation process that we actually terminate the collaboration with the government – but those are very very few and extreme cases, and even then we can remain engaged in most cases through support to civil society.”

In the interview, the EU Commission staff confirmed that dialogue is a very crucial tool for the whole partnership relationship and it takes place in different levels. She also puts emphasis on the use of *political* dialogues, which are to be conducted at the national and regional level to define “the values on which the cooperation must be based and later takes the form of a management tool for monitoring purposes and to solve differences of opinion and build consensus” (Olsson and Wohlgemuth, 2003:5) . It is in this level that negotiations and dialogues regarding the essential elements are being pursued. Furthermore, when asked about monitoring and evaluation, she mentioned that dialogues are also used to follow-up and monitor mid-term and end of term progress. The above statement underlined the paradox between ownership and conditionality. On one hand, ownership means that the partner countries will take more responsibility for their own priorities, their own poverty reduction plans and implementations. On the other hand, the EU needs to put forward its views on the political situation and democratization process in the partner countries which can almost appear as conditionality. ‘Difficult partners’,
according to the European Centre for Dev. Policy Management (ECDPM), are countries that lack a commitment to good governance, which is not equivalent to ‘weak’ governance (ECDPM, 2005:1). ‘Weak’ countries are committed and exerting efforts but lack the necessary capacity. The ECDPMs basic principle for dealing with ‘difficult partnerships’ is to remain engaged, motivated by solidarity, security, aid effectiveness and the risk for conflict spreading into neighbouring countries (ibid.). A new procedure for dealing with violations of the essential elements has been added to the Cotonou partnership agreement where the responsibility was placed to the State and flexible consultation processes will be implemented (EU website/Cotonou, 2006). Remaining engaged in difficult partnerships calls for collaboration between diverse actors to find opportunities and strategies to promote change over time, measures for analysing the emergence of the difficult partnership and its transition to effective partnership, how to balance security and development concerns and to make use of the experience to enhance future cooperation with difficult partners (ibid.). This kind of difficult partnership is a relationship where the fundamental values diverge. Almost a decade ago, Mats Karlsson argued that one cannot engage in partnership without being explicit about values which means sincerity. He continued by saying that transparency of interests to find a common ground is also crucial when establishing partnerships.

Learning from practice in this kind of partnership is critical for future partnership relationships.

4. THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

When the struggle against apartheid regime was over in South Africa, Sweden was determined to support South Africans in their efforts to promote peace and democracy among its peoples and in the region. One of the salient features of the development programme for South Africa 2004-2008 is the focus from traditional to a “broader cooperation based on mutuality and joint financing” 10. The description of partnerships and its characteristics in the Swedish Africa policy applies mostly to partnerships between governments but it also applies to a large extent to development cooperation partnerships between other actors and various organizations including the civil society. South Africa is one of the countries that have devised schemes to decentralize authority to the regional and municipal levels (Danielsson, A., 2005:3). This South Africa’s decentralisation is one of the challenges that donors are facing since the last decade because it implies that donors have to initiate cooperation with lower levels of
government administration (Havnerik, K., Arkadie van, Brian, 1996:21). Local authorities in Sweden have a long tradition in self-government, with a high level of autonomy to organize and implement their own strategies and activities (Danielsson, A., 2005:4). Under the framework of Sida’s urban development programme, three municipal ‘partnerships’ in South Africa were initiated namely: Sol Plaatje-Falun/Borlänge, Göteborg-Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMM) and Buffalo City-Gävle (Danielsson, A., 2005:9). “The cooperation with the municipalities is unique in that it is one of the few examples where Sida, with the approval of the South African government, is co-operating directly with a local authority” (Topham, S. et. al., 2005:15). It is important to note that this empirical study is not an evaluation of the content of the partnership but a study of the concept of partnership and how it is manifested in the Göteborg-NMMM ‘partnership’.

4.1 The Göteborg-NMMM Partnership

The partnership between Göteborg and Port Elizabeth was formalised in 1999 when the political heads of both municipalities signed a three-year partnership agreement stating that a partnership will be operationalised and will include collaboration within the following sectors: tourism, arts and culture, municipal and urban development, business, sport and the tertiary sector. In 2003, a continuation of the partnership for another three-year period was a reality. This time the sport sector had concluded their project and was not represented in the continuation. The municipality was renamed Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMM) when Port Elizabeth was integrated with Uitenhague and Despatch. According to Sida and the participating municipalities, the vision for the partnership is “to use partnership to create conditions that will be conducive to sustainable, integrated local economic development, poverty alleviation, democracy and gender equality, through genuine partnership as well as real local ownership”. The mission statement includes a move “from development aid to equal partnership and mutual benefit co-operation”. The programmes initiated in the different sectors involved in the partnership are to be guided by these vision and mission statements.

4.1.1 The two cities – the preconditions for partnership

NMMM, the fifth largest municipality in South Africa, is situated 10 000 km from the city of Göteborg and has a population that is three times larger than Göteborg’s population. The question is what brought these two cities together and decided to
establish a partnership. In the context of international development cooperation, the obvious purpose for establishing partnership is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of development efforts (Brinkerhoff, J., 2002:3). What makes NMMM and Göteborg suitable for partnership in development cooperation? ‘Choosing the right partner for the right reasons’ is among the first steps in the methods of partnership. Jennifer Brinkerhoff (2002:47) argued that “the primary driver for partnerships is to access key resources to reach objectives”. During the interview, the respondent from Sida mentioned that the political leaders of the two municipalities met with each other both in Göteborg and in Port Elizabeth, pursued dialogues to get to know one another and one another’s environment. They identified common interests and shared goals, values and challenges. Both cities are situated in the coast with expansive developments along the harbour area as well as active centres for learning and research. The principal industries in both cities include the automobile industry and the presence of the Swedish SKF in NMMM was also one of the decisive factors.

[Sida]

“…in 1997-1998, Sida decided to support Port Elizabeth within the framework of urban development programme and I [Sida] contacted Göran Johansson in Göteborg. He investigated the preconditions for a prospective collaboration between the two cities. The whole process took time because Göteborg has had experiences of unsuccessful partnership in the past… this time, he wanted it to be different and the preconditions should be taken into considerations properly […] the partnership should also be supported whole-heartedly by the political leaders of both municipalities […] the visit to Port Elizabeth and in particular to SKF contributed very much to the decision…”

And who identified the areas of collaboration?

“…the two municipalities had a number of dialogues on the terms of the agreement and the sectors that will be involved […] they themselves identified the relevant areas and I just let it happen…Göteborg and Port Elizabeth decided together without any conditionality from my [Sida] side.”

The story revealed that due to past experiences, the necessity of taking a closer look into the preconditions and identifying the shared goals and the comparative advantages in resources of the participants involved are crucial to establishing and making partnerships work. Another issue that was stressed by the respondent was that it was important that the partnership had the undivided support of the top political leaders, with the participation of all the political parties governing the municipalities. She also added that the partnership had broad participation and support within the different sectors of society. At the same time there is an obvious emotional dimension because SKF is something both municipalities really have in common and is identified with Göteborg in particular. This is something tangible that the political leaders from both sides could relate to as
‘peers’. Management committees for Göteborg and NMMM respectively were formed and a contractual agreement was signed by the highest political representative of the municipalities in 1999. According to the last Sida review in 2002, poverty alleviation was not explicitly mentioned among the intended goals but the management committee councillors were in agreement that poverty alleviation is the guiding principle of the partnership and the activities in NMMM must support the ambitions towards these goals (Topham, S., et al, 2004). Partnership is in this respect used as an instrument to focus development cooperation towards a specific direction, which confirms J. Brinkerhoff’s statement:

“Partnership can provide a means of developing strategic direction and coordination. It affords a scale and integration of interests and services that are impossible for any actor operating alone. […] Creativity may emerge from the assembling of diverse actors with different perspectives and expertise, resulting in efficiency improvements”

-J. Brinkerhoff, 2002:4

4.2 The conceptualization of Partnership in practice

Like in many other countries, there is a line between rhetoric and practice when it comes to partnership. It is therefore the aim of this study to clarify some dimensions of the concept of partnership and how it is manifested in practice in the case of Göteborg-NMMM partnership. In the following sections, I will discuss and analyse the issues surrounding some of the distinguishing dimensions of this particular partnership in practice, which includes the initiation, design and maintenance. My hope is that those involved in partnerships would find it meaningful and inspiring to move beyond the rhetorical level.

4.2.1 The Organization and a Culture of dialogue

The municipalities’ existing organizational structures are not adequate to support a partnership of this kind with six different independent sectors involved. It was therefore necessary for Sida and the municipal leaders to continue the political dialogue in order to identify a structure that will be conducive for the partnership to work:

[Sida] “…the partnership’s organizational structure was discussed in the political dialogues. The model was based on Göteborg’s and Port Elizabeth’s experiences on what worked in the past. […] It was then also important that this was supported by the other political parties. There should be ‘acceptance’ …”

When asked about the important factors that affect the quality of the partnership dialogues and that led to the partnership, the Sida expert identified full support from the
highest political level on both sides and the participation of the opposition and other political parties in the municipalities as crucial elements.

With the identification of the six sectors of collaboration, sector champions were also identified in Göteborg and NMMM respectively together with a Management Committee\textsuperscript{12} from both sides. A project coordinator for Göteborg and NMMM respectively were also appointed. (See Appendix (i), fig.4.2). The coordinators had the overall responsibility to coordinate, follow-up and report to Sida on the progress of the projects in the partnership. The sector champions, together with the project coordinators, identified the different potential actors in their own sectors. Partnership dialogues were organized and pursued with the actors to further come into an agreement with regard to the content or relevant issues for collaboration and joint projects\textsuperscript{11}. From a South African point of view:

\textbf{[PCSa]}:

"...we have partnerships with ...America and China, we also got a Dutch partner and I've forgotten the another one […] but for me this partnership works because a lot has been done right from the start to make sure that everything is in place […] that you have the programme, that you have the areas of focus, that you have the management committees, and of course the funding to pay for the distance between the two countries and the two cities […] so this partnership, irrespective of everything else, is for us the best partnership that we are working with… And you know that we work around the issues that are problematic because that is part of the friendship."

It was confirmed by several respondents [project coordinators, manager and project leaders] that there were many dialogues from the beginning between the coordinators, sector champions and the different potential actors:

\textbf{[PCSw]}:  
"…AD from Sida has done a lot to keep the ball rolling and to operationalise the whole thing. Without her, it would not have been possible…"

\textbf{[Manager, Sa]}:

"…Ja, I wasn’t very clear then with the partnership and the background. But we [people in our sector] were talking to each other about issues, and I think the discussions and that the dialogue simply helped people to find each other […] but I could not identify with the whole side of marketing… you know marketing your university to different people- but when you talk about the implications of bringing in international students, immigrants and students with lower socio-economical status in the system, I could identify with that…and led to the feeling that introducing something like peer helping would help the whole process […] because it helps people coming in to the system to be welcomed and to learn the ropes and that is a very important aspect of integrating people to higher education. I think people saw the benefits of that.”

\textbf{[PLSa]}:

"…I was informed through several people, by the sector champions and also from other individuals about the partnership. We were invited to an introductory workshop and exploratory workshop […] we were in a kind of developmental explorative stages and that something might be happening…"
The last two statements above were quoted from interviews with a South African project leader and South African manager. They confirmed Gus Edgren’s position on dialogue as an interaction between people who are equals and open-minded with the purpose of reaching a common vision, as opposed to trying to defeat the other person’s position (Olsson and Wohlgemuth, 2003: 23).

Another Swedish project leader told me about their numerous study visits in different potential partners around Port Elizabeth, to pursue dialogue in order to identify shared goals and needs. These statements from the different respondents bear witness to two issues: (i) that dialogues were used as an instrument for selecting cooperating actors and (ii) at the same time identify focus areas, the shared goals and values that will be the foundation of the activities in each sector. At this stage, the words of Carlos Lopes on dialogue makes a lot of sense when he pointed out the importance of motivation to participate in dialogue and that sufficient time should be allotted to dialogue. (Olsson, J., and Wohlgemuth, L., 2003:42)

Most of the project leaders and coordinators confirmed that the sector champions were very active in pursuing the dialogues and in some cases were the ones who actually identified the focus areas in their sectors. As one of the South African project leaders commented:

[PLSa]: “…we thought about it and thought, and we were feeling our way…and thought it was suitable…but to be quite honest, for the first few months, I didn’t actually know what was it [the partnership] all about…not knowing if Sweden might be interested so we just have to tell people what it was all about so they can decide. And that’s what we did…And ah, there was quite a quiet time…we thought that things were dead, or we didn’t hear anything, and we almost forgot about it. And all of a sudden, by March 2002. we were told: ‘Could you go to Sweden and reintroduce the whole thing there’, […] and then it was quite dead again in 2002 …”

Did you personally have a dialogue with anyone from the Göteborg side [after the visit to Göteborg] before 2003?

[PLSa]: “No. We did not hear anything. We almost forgotten about it. Maybe, there was something in the pipeline and they will let us know […] I did not want to presume that the whole thing was dead, but it was just very quiet…”

“[…] and then 2003, … I was contacted, very early in the year, I think. Sort of started talking about it. Then we knew there was going to be a visit …then the project was accepted and we have to start operationalising it […]”

“…and how excited we were. And very soon, we realized that one of the Göteborg partners, […] was sharing this feeling with us. And it was shared values, I think it was important to us […]”
The above quotes highlight an example when a prospective project leader/organization did not feel connected to their counterparts and the dialogues in the initiation phase were not enough to bring about clarity regarding the mutuality in interests and values that will govern the co-operation. Things were “slow” and “quiet” as was described above. Although the focus of this study was what happened afterwards in 2003-2005, it was also important in this case to look back into the background, which the respondent lifted in the interview and talked very freely about. The partnership dialogues are thus actively pursued at this stage both ‘horizontally’ and ‘vertically’ in the organization. The role of trust in these dialogues is confirmed by the project coordinators:

[PCSa] “I definitely believe that there must be trust between the actors. And its part on the political level and gets down to the management level, and it is very important on the coordination level where I work…where my partner and myself need to understand both sides fully, what the partnership entails and must be able to work with that quality part. Similarly, you’ll have a better effect if you could retain the core group within that part of the partnership. And unfortunately, at times we had lost sector champions on both sides and that definitely had an influence on the development and the effectiveness of specific projects within the partnership […] it is not a partnership, it is really a friendship […] to want to find something that you could achieve and that could work for both sides. If it is one-sided, it will never be effective.”

And the important factors for success?

[PCSw] “The participating actors’ motivation and commitment…they must believe that they can learn something and they can contribute something […] Another factor is the dialogue between the co-operating partners. They should be open and constructive. We have got to know each other, we have had personal interactions and openness towards one another. There is confidence and trust. It depends very much on the persons involved if one will succeed in a partnership or not. I and my counterpart can talk to each other without any problem because we learned to get to know each other…”

The majority of the project leaders also spoke positively of their relationship to their counterparts. Their description of the process involved in getting to know someone on the other side of the equator and working side by side for three years. They spoke of the ‘dialogues’ in the form of emails, sometimes even 4-5 times a week, ‘figuring things out’, and of the “memories” connected with the emails and of the partnership relationship. Establishing partnership is, for many of the participating actors in this partnership, equivalent to establishing a personal bond, a trustful and respectful relationship.
4.2.2 Focus Areas and Ownership, Goals and Motivations

The two municipalities’ political leaders and management committees included the following five sectors in the partnership 2003-2005: tourism, arts and culture, business, tertiary sector and municipal urban planning. The goals of the partnership dialogues were to identify the focus areas in each sector and identify the corresponding project leaders. I asked a coordinator about the process of identifying the project activities:

[PCSa]:
“It is for the sector champions and the project leaders to have that understanding of one another and to have discussions to come up with the project proposal that they can ‘sell’ to the management committee.”

Independent of each other, the possible projects/focus areas that the actors identified embraces the following themes: integration and diversity, environment and social issues, joint arts and reading projects for children, marketing the cities and a visitor research database. These themes are certainly mutually relevant to both municipalities. The issue of understanding each other’s town planning problems, e.g. the issue of segregation is present in both municipalities. Widening access and participation in higher education is linked to the efforts of creating a supportive environment that embraces diversity and where everyone feels socially, academically and emotionally integrated. This is definitely relevant and a shared goal for the two cities’ higher education institutions. A close cooperation between the city library and local schools is a vision expressed by the project leader in the arts and culture in Göteborg. School children in NMMM also need to become aware of the enormous learning opportunities that their libraries can offer. Finally, the tourism sector defined a common goal of supporting each other in joint ventures that include VISIT reservation system as well as research related projects. The relevance to both cities of the focus areas which were chosen together by both cities were meant to encourage the exchange of knowledge and experiences between the actors involved and ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. The respondents had a very clear understanding of the partnership’s principle of ‘mutual benefit’ and a Swedish project leader pointed out several times that it is not a question of ‘helping them’.

[PLSw]: “…this is supposed to be a development cooperation...to work together and develop what we are doing ...we are not meant to go there as consultants and say ‘do this and do that and write a report on a plan. It was not that, although some may think it is.”
The issue of ownership is very much related to the issue of collaboration programmes based on the partners’ own priorities and all the respondents confirmed that the content of their projects was a part of their core activities. One of the coordinators believes that the work done in a partnership should be part of everyday work, “it should not be seen as additional work; it is the only way that it can be assertive and efficient”. One of the project leaders stated that since what was done is part of their core activities, they will sustain the programme even after the project was terminated last year. Another approach to the formation of partnerships is to investigate the motives of the potential actors in the partnership and conceptualize the incentives that the organization uses to gain participation (Peters, G., 1998:27). When asked about their motives for participation, the South African participants mentioned their interest in building ties internationally, to broaden and widen one’s horizon, to acquire international perspective and point of view, the interests in the whole issue of managing diversity, to foster mutually beneficial collaboration and opportunity to reach the Swedish tourist market.

An important comment on mutuality and motivation came from one of the coordinators:

[PCSa]: “I believe there is something you can learn from South African institutions … in Sweden, with the ‘old’ Swedes and the ‘new’ Swedes. Because there are also problems there, and what is in South Africa can be embraced as a very good example. But that must require a mind change! […] And I understand in Europe, you can have far better partnerships because of you know, not so far distance, and you are closer to one another in terms of the need, but South Africa is a wonderful place to learn…”

The Swedish respondents also mentioned widening perspectives, acquire new impulses to be more effective in what they are doing and the importance of international collaboration as motives for participation. However, it was pointed out by one of the Swedish project leaders that without Sida’s external funding, it would not be possible because his organization would then prefer to choose a European partner to minimize the cost of travel.

Another issue regarding motivation that was brought out is the fact that the participation can also be influenced by the possibility of travelling to South Africa. A primary motive for participation could also be to get a trip to South Africa for some. Of course, the motive matched a certain incentive that is embedded in the programme and the focus is concentrated only to the visits and not on the content of the programme and collaboration, making participation very sporadic. From a coordinator’s point of view:

[PCSa]: “At the end of the day, […] the results are provided by the people who worked in the partnership […] not people who are maybe bought by the idea, that oh it would be nice to go
to South Africa [...] because that also happens. You could see that people participate and that participation is sporadic…”

“The thing is, for me, if people believe in a project and they work hard in the project, then some of your reward would be seeing the country of the people that you work with and therefore building your relationship and making it stronger. But it should not be the beginning and the end.”

The overall motives presented by the respondents made me to believe that the partnership is seen in essence as a moral commitment on the part of the participants, which means that they perceive the act of co-operating, building relationships and working together with an international ‘partner’ is as important as the specific outcomes. The difficulty mentioned above could then be very real, when one party is participating on these moral reasons and the other party’s participation is only based on a more tangible reward.

4.2.3 Some Aspects of the Partnership relationship

“...In a partnership relationship, the thing that makes it work is the friendship and the trust.”
-excerpt from an interview with a coordinator

The partnership relationship has been featured in the revitalised Swedish Africa Policy and has been characterized by its qualitative aspects and code of conduct. The project leaders are the people that worked closely to one another for three years. They, in one way or another expressed that it was a process and in this process they have explored the meaning of partnership because they just know that they are now engaging in a partnership relationship. One of them said that it is something that you develop slowly, something that you would know what it is….and as time went on the knowledge and insight in what partnership is actually grew and got real. So I asked them about the meaning and distinguishing characteristics or important aspects of this partnership. The table below shows the result of what the project leaders and the manager said:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 Project leaders (2 Sw + 4 Sa) + 1 manager</th>
<th>Characteristics or important aspects of the partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>…it is between people with the same needs, the same idea, common ideas of working together for a shorter or longer period of time, shared values, and things that we could get passionate about, common goal, common interest,. We were almost talking the same language, not something imposed on you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is the mutuality; it is all about trust; there must be no hidden agenda...in the process, we learned what partnership is;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>That there is an exchange; mutuality—we gave and we received; we realized how different and at the same time how alike we are; we didn’t get any policy guidelines but we learned along the way; now it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is our project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Exchange of knowledge and experiences; there is mutuality, we work and we have common goals, there is a personal relationship, open communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It benefits both cities and the population to improve their quality of life; a good form of collaboration; allows you to get a deeper understanding of issues that you are working together with; multi-dimensional-embraces and utilises city-wide issues; a relationship of Friendship-you get to know one another, a cultural understanding and network;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Give and take; have an understanding of the circumstances; mutual respect; that we are equal…equal in the respect that we gave each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Real partnership is when people actually collaborate to reach their objectives together…they are working together. That is what we can do now; we could establish common goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the above statements can be summarized in the following themes (i) an aspect of exchange and mutual benefit (ii) working together towards the common goal and (ii) a subject-to subject attitude. In the interview, the respondents also emphasized how they “learned a lot”. The process of “working together towards a common goal” mentioned above is thus experienced as a mutual ‘learning’ situation.

Since trust is a prerequisite for a meaningful dialogue, I asked the respondents about the issues that they discuss with their partners on a weekly basis. This question is built on the assumption that the trustor’s decision to share something personal about himself/herself is an indication of ‘trust’ or ‘trust development’. By combining interpersonal nature of trust as a condition for cooperation, Butler and Cantrell (1984) proposed the following five components of trust (or characteristics of the persons involved): integrity, competence, consistency, loyalty and openness. Openness refers here to the willingness to share ideas and information with others (Nooteboom, B, Six, F., 2003:129). The answers that I got was that their communication does not only revolve around work issues but includes really personal matters too, like family, marriage, values, religion, get to know one another, each other’s cultures and society. The respondents confirmed that the relationship between them and their counterparts is a very personal relationship. They have met each other’s families and visited each other’s homes. One of the respondents talked about trust in the following way:

[PLSa]: “…it is something that you earned. It is not there from the beginning. It is something that you need to develop, something that you need to commit yourself to. I cannot trust somebody that I didn’t know. And the only way to know somebody is to take risk…and it is a wonderful dimension that is being added to this kind of partnership when the trusting starts taking in…because it wasn’t there from the beginning”
And what about equality, I asked them. All of the respondents replied with a positive answer to this. Some of the explanations were that they felt that they were equals in the way they treat each other with respect, and also in terms of abilities. Even if Sweden is advanced in some ways, there are still things that the South Africans feel they could bring-in into the partnership.

The South Africans mentioned ‘friendship’ as very much connected to a genuine partnership relationship. And how do friends behave toward each other. A common rule of friendship entails that it is a relationship between equals and friends get to know one another. Two of the South Africans also used marriage as a metaphor for the partnership relationship.

When I asked them in what ways is the relationship like marriage, they replied:

[PLSa]: “I mean there is reciprocity, mutual trust, the giving and taking, sharing benefits, both enjoyment and responsibility…”

[PLSa]: “It is an on-going relationship, you have to work on the relationship, very much feel that you benefit from the relationship. There is mutual growth- not only exchange of knowledge but also development is there…that it takes you further.”

Consequently, in terms of equality in taking control and responsibility, all of the project leaders replied that they, together with their counterparts, take the lead and share the responsibilities in designing and implementing the project activities. In some cases, the decisions were preceded by “lively” debates and open discussions. One of the respondents emphasized that the ‘distance’ poses a serious problem in terms of communication especially when they have different ideas, different perceptions and different ways of operating. It is in these situations that it would be of great help if partners can pursue dialogue face-to-face to update perceptions and gain better understanding of the situation.

Another thing that I asked the respondents was if they were aware of a code of conduct between partners. 8 out of 9 respondents answered that there certainly is a code of conduct in the partnership relationship, it is not explicit but it is there. One of the coordinators commented:

[PCSa]: “And the longer people work together, the more they work within that code of conduct without even knowing it.”
The nine (6 South Africans and 3 Swedes) respondents identified the code of conduct between partners in terms of the following:

- transparency
- mutual respect
- shared value and norms
- commitment
- openness
- mutual trust
- confidence in one another
- open and honest communication
- being involved in what is going on and in setting the standards

It is important to note that the answers given above are predominantly qualities that apply to most people’s mental models of a close relationship like ‘true friendship’. None of the respondents connected the partnership’s code of conduct with, for example management of results or clarity in payments and reporting which were also featured in the Swedish policy. “A code of conduct elucidates the premises for co-operation in partnership, enhances transparency and entails a declaration of intent on the manner in which the parties wish the co-operation to be pursued” (Gov. Communication 1997/98:122:82).

### 4.2.4 Difficulties and challenges

This section will present the difficulties and challenges that the project leaders and coordinators have encountered or identified along the way. The aim of this section is to find out what kind of problems could come up in this type of development cooperation. Some of these difficulties and challenges that the actors are battling with could also explore further the aspects of the relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Difficulties and challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The distance. Anyway, there is the email and I could on a daily basis talk to my partner, share ideas, sort things out, writing reports together, figuring things out, talking about problems...The greatest challenge is to try to get the other partner in the picture as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communication. We do it through email but it takes time and we cannot talk directly to the people that are working. We have a different organizational culture, not hierarchical. Problems with the availability of the materials needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An increased demand in the resources. When you develop something, you cannot do it overnight. You have to allocate resources especially in the beginning. You have to stretch your resources, negotiate with the rest of the staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Busy schedules. You have to focus on the partnership project so it does not get lost among other priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Few opportunities to talk face-to-face, only through emails. Difficult when you have cultural differences and different perceptions and different ways of looking at things. We have different ways of operating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The distance. Would want to meet more often. Another thing is the restructuring and changes in the organization, when you lose staff,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
you lose the information and the skills.

| 7   | We have so much work to do. Even if the activities are part of our core activities, we also have other priorities and work to do. Or else we do not have any difficulties in working together. Perhaps with regard to the guidelines on how the report should be done. We refuse to follow a very detailed reporting scheme when they suddenly changed the guidelines. |
| 8   | When the commitment is not there anymore, it is difficult to continue. Differences in organisational structures for the participating organisations. |
| 9   | In some sectors, we were never as effective as we want to be because of the losses of staff. |

(i) The ‘distance’ was identified as the primary difficulty. There is a need to communicate to one another face-to-face in order to clarify things especially when there is a possible difference in ideas and perceptions. The project leaders worked closely to each other through emails, often several times a day. One of the project leaders also said that because of the distance, it is essential that they keep in touch, so the relationship will not be forgotten. Another project leader pointed out too that it is important to have a focus on the project activities because it could get lost in all the other priorities and work that the organisation is engaged in. The ‘distance’ has an implication on the development of ‘trust’ if the ‘distance’ means reduced information for the trustor about the trustee and the situation. As discussed in section 2.2, trust can change over time as the trustor gathers more information, gains a better understanding of the situation and updates his/her perceptions.

(ii) Another difficulty that was identified was the loss of continuity when staff change jobs or the organisation is restructured. A lot of information as well as skills are lost and taken from the project. This has also been expressed in one way or another, by all the project leaders and coordinators.

(iii) The difference in organizational and working culture. The South African system is said to be more hierarchical and has a more top-down way of reporting and providing information, which could take time for the counterparts to reply to an issue in certain occasions. This ‘cultural difference’ was not however, brought out as a general problem by all the project leaders. It could also depend on how the project is organized in South Africa and Sweden respectively. An example mentioned by the project coordinators is the reading project, where the NMMM project leader worked with several libraries and six schools while the Göteborg project leader only worked with one library and two schools. This entails a big difference in the efforts to spread information and project management
for Göteborg and NMMM project leaders. It is important in this case, not to reduce and exclude all other explanations and meanings in reading events and practices. Several respondents were pointing out the importance of getting to know not only one another but also each other’s society and how it works. One of the South Africans commented:

[PCSa]: “If you do not know each other’s society, you cannot have an effective project. You need to know where the people are coming from. And for us in this country, inclusivity is a very, very big thing…”

Difference in ‘perceptions’ was one thing that could be an issue in this regard. In a case where a Swedish respondent used the words “broadening” and “deepening”, South African respondents referred to the issues of “inclusivity” and “exclusivity”. Using ‘genuine dialogue’ as a tool brought about “understanding” and “respect” as one respondent pointed out. She exclaimed, “I know now that this project is a project for understanding really”.

Another issue in this regard is the business sector’s partnership initiative, to bring together business ties between the two cities, proved to be ineffective and without success due to structural differences. It was difficult to find actors that could match each other’s capacity and resources to create a win-win situation.

(iv) Another challenge mentioned above is lack of commitment among other partners and project participants. The question is what does one do when there was no common goal, not a common agreement, not a common vision, not a common excitement about it … Trying to explore the meanings of partnership and what distinguishes it from other inter-organizational collaboration can also mean identifying what partnership is not.

(v) An increased demand in resources. This is crucial to the maintenance of the partnership and is directly connected to the participating institutions’ organizational support to the partnership. In the same way that the partnership needs full support from the top political level of the municipalities, it is equally important for the participating staff to have full support from their institution’s top management and immediate organizational environment. The resources and time spent on the partnership should be clear to all parties and priorities put into place. As one of the coordinators pointed out, the project activities should be made part of their everyday task and not additional workload.

4.2.5 Outcomes and Visions

The partnership has clearly brought about positive feelings and values to the persons involved. The mutual benefit co-operation has materialised and can show both qualitative
and quantitative results in four sectors. The quantitative outcomes apply mostly to NMMM with the exception of the tertiary sector where NMMM introduced new innovative ideas and methods to support students in higher education in Göteborg.

Here are some of the outcomes:

The NMMM tourism sector has now launched a VISIT online reservation system and a call centre based on the Göteborg-model. The NMB-Card based on the Göteborg Pass is also planned for implementation in 2006. The East Indiaman joint project early this year has valuable promotional value for both NMMM and Göteborg as tourist’s destinations. Göteborg has also acquired new knowledge in the concept of ‘eco-tourism’ from their South African partners. The vision expressed was to continue the collaboration and start working together on new developments like designing tourist’s packages for the World Cup and involving new actors in the collaboration e.g. airline companies.

The reading projects has now brought Swedish and South African school children closer to each other through literature and got to learn about each other’s societies, geography and history. The project teams have also published a book, entitled “Books build bridges”, on the collaboration, the project design and implementation for future partnership practitioners. The SA project leader’s vision is to make the library a center for cultural activities.

In the tertiary sector, NMMM had offered Peer helper trainer’s workshops for staff from Göteborg and other municipalities, as well as Norway. In return, they have enhanced and developed their own programme. Their vision is to improve their evaluation process, which the project leaders identified as key element for sustainability, that is giving people results or impacts to make them really believe in the programme. Another vision is to spread peer helping in Scandinavia and for NMMM to be leader in the field in Africa. Last but not least, the benefits for the municipal and urban development sector includes learning in-depth other types of planning situations, better understanding of their professional goals and the added perspective. The vision expressed by the South African project leader is mutual growth and assistance with problem-solving, valuing international perspective, increasing the depth and breadth of the interaction so it becomes more and more meaningful. I asked one of the project coordinators why gaining ‘new perspective’ is not given much importance in assessing ‘mutual benefit’ for the Swedish side:

[PCSa]: “…yes, I think they give you new ideas and perspectives, but how do you measure perspectives? I could understand that but you must also understand that even in South Africa, you have very good ideas in Sweden, but it is not to say that they are all “applicable” within the Nelson Mandela Metro.”
Given that most of the quantitative results are on the NMMM side [with the exception of the tertiary sector], it is often interpreted that ‘mutual benefit’ co-operation is not realized. However, the coordinator continued:

[PCSa]: “…I do believe that after six years, there must be mutual benefit. […] I think it might not be the case on both sides. But if you evaluate and if you weigh it, it comes to the same thing. And you will always find that in some sectors that the mutual benefit is more on the South African side than on the Swedish side in terms of individual projects but when you add them all up it should come to mutual benefit.”

The project reports and interview with the project leader confirmed that it is difficult to have quantitative outcomes because town planning issues are predominantly longer term issues. So in this sector, the outcomes are not quantifiable and difficult to perceive.

According to an evaluation commissioned by Sida in 2004, the partnership is seen by politicians as “an expression of international solidarity to support growth and development in the new South Africa” (Topham, S. et. al., 2005:33). I find this statement incomplete because it gives the impression that it is a one-sided affair. In genuine partnership, partners are equal and partners support one another’s growth and development. The partnership relationship in this study clearly shows mutuality. The Swedish respondents confirmed both the personal and professional growth and development acquired through the partnership. The partnership relationship thus contributes to capacity development on both sides.

**Interrupting ‘sustainability’ in partnership.** When I asked the respondents about sustainability, they replied that they have already thought of strategies on how to sustain the project activities on their own. However, one of the respondents questioned: what is meant by sustainability. Is it the sustainability of the project or the sustainability of the partnership?. The latter implies that at some point, the partnership in the different sectors can continue without Sida funding. In other words, the cities should device ways and means to keep the partnership relationship going without external funding. However, when sustainability is mentioned in current Sida documents, the focus is on the following issue: ‘can Africans sustain the initiated programmes/projects with the help of their local capacities and without Sida funding’. Clarifying the meaning of sustainability in this context is a relevant issue in the light of the new kind of partnership.
5. CONCLUSIONS

“Basic to the notion of good partnership though is the question of whether we share common ideals and goals, whether we can trust each other, and whether we can feel for each other. It would help if we liked each other a little. But it would be even better if we felt passionate about each other. Like in the renewed passion of a long, long marriage.”

-Angela Ofori-Atta, 1997: 183

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the notion of partnership in the context of international development cooperation, applies to the city-to-city collaboration between Göteborg and Nelson Mandel Metropolitan Municipality. The first three generic characteristics of partnership identified by G. Peters and mentioned in section 2.1 are obviously fulfilled since there are at least two principal actors involved and are committed and it is also a continuing relationship during 2003-2005. The actors are capable of bargaining on their own behalf and there is strong evidence of an enduring relationship, a “friendship” among the actors in the partnership. The condition that each actor contributes something to the partnership as well as shared responsibility for the outcomes of the activities are supported by the shared goals (section described in 4.2.2) and the described outcomes (section 4.2.5). The actors themselves identified the focus areas and the goals for collaboration that defined the project activities, which were part of both parties’ core activities. Each participating institution contributes with personnel, material and immaterial resources to the partnership, which can be seen in the choice of focus areas (section 4.2.2) that defined the issues linked to potential exchanges and sharing of resources. The last criteria that refers to shared responsibilities and outcomes of their activities are embedded in the autonomy and negotiated decisions of the partnership which was facilitated by partnership dialogues. Roles and responsibilities are defined in the approved project proposals and the partners take responsibility for implementation and results. Furthermore, this partnership is a formally defined contractual agreement between the two municipalities. It is supported by a well-defined organizational structure with management committees, project coordinators, sector champions and project leaders on both sides as well as a Sida Urban advisor in Port Elizabeth. The contractual agreement supported by the highest political level in the municipalities and the well-structured organization created a conducive environment for the partnership to thrive and perpetuate. The project leaders’ positive interaction with the project coordinators and the latter’s wise guidance and assistance in
problem-solving through constructive dialogues are also key factors in this partnership. There is evidence that the project leaders’ immediate organizational environment has direct influence on the maintenance of the partnership. The empirical study shows that even if the actors confirmed that the partnership activities are part of their core activities, their institutions has also other priorities and the partnership takes time and demands increased resources (see section 4.2.4). According to the revitalised Africa policy, the code of conduct for partnership includes clarity on resource commitments, payments and reporting principles (Government Communication 1997/98:122:81). This code of conduct, that applies to all the levels of the partnership organization, has a tangible impact on the maintenance of the partnership activities and should be given priority in the initiation phase.

On one hand, from the instrumentalist’s perspective, the Göteborg-NMMM partnership was formed as an instrument to move from development aid to a more equal and broader co-operation with joint funding between Sweden and South Africa. The study shows that the partnership is an instrument that facilitates this process of transition. On the other hand, the partnership can be seen from an institutionalist’s point of view, as a value institution which is defined by shared values, which in this case is ‘equality’ between partners, mutual respect and mutual benefit. The practices within the Göteborg-NMMM partnership disavow the old image of donor superiority which is constituted by the idea of ‘development’ and ‘underdevelopment’. Although there are some comments on how advanced Sweden is in some areas, there are also evidences that South Africans showed expertise in other specific areas. Furthermore, the empirical study showed that the following five aspects of partnership that former State Secretary Mats Karlsson identified in 1997 were manifested in the partnership:

(i) a subject-to subject attitude (section 4.2.3)
(ii) being explicit about values (section 4.2.3)
(iii) transparency of interests (section 4.2.1 and 4.2.3)
(iv) clear contractual standards (section 4.1.4 and 4.1.2)
(v) equality of capacity (section 4.2.3 and 4.2.5)

The transparency of interests refers to situations when ideas diverge. Both parties must be willing to participate in dialogues, which requires openness, in order to find a common ground. The respondents identified openness as an element in the partnership’s code of conduct. The issue of clear contractual standards is definitely fulfilled in the political level. A formal contractual agreement does however not apply to the project level. This often results in one of the difficulties identified by the respondents, which is the loss of
project participants as well as loss of continuity. Furthermore, this aspect is also closely linked to the code of conduct regarding ‘clarity on resource commitments’. The issue of ‘human resource commitment’ was clearly pointed out in the study as one of the crucial elements that makes the partnership work. And when it comes to personal commitment, the issues of motivation and incentives become fundamental points of departure and issues for discussion (see section 4.2.2). The last condition which is the equality of capacity refers to the capacity of both sides to be in equal command of all the issues in the agreement. The respondents witnessed that they consider themselves equal in abilities and the respect they gave each other.

- The aim of the Swedish government as expressed in the revitalised Africa Policy is to bring about a ‘qualitatively new co-operation relationship’. The development cooperation relationship between Sweden and South Africa has been going-on for decades. However, the policy, through the notion of partnership, aims to enhance the quality of this relationship. The study shows that the crucial element for the fulfilment of this objective is the deepened culture of dialogue based on mutual trust. There is no doubt in my mind that this study strengthened the conviction that dialogue is a powerful tool for success in this partnership and trust, a prerequisite for a fruitful dialogue and for the sustainability of the relationship (see section 4.2.1). According to Margaretha Ringstöm (section 3.2.3): ‘partnership without genuine dialogue is unthinkable’. The respondents identified the relationship with Friendship. The implication of this is that the participants apply the rules of friendship to the partnership relationship. This reminds me of the words of Angela Afori-Atta (1997) to ‘Little Brother Sweden’: “…I ask for a courtship of friendship first in this new partnership.” The notion of friendship and courtship strengthens the participants’ evidence that partnership is a process. They did not become genuine partners overnight. It was stressed that the relationship and the trust takes time and efforts on both sides.

- Finally, the empirical study shows that the partnership promotes acceptance and sustainability based on peer-to-peer problem-solving. The study shows that partnership between ‘peers’, in this case, between people with perceived commonalities and similarities in terms of professional organization, has opportunities to be accepted and bring in creativity and win-win solutions to each other’s organizations. Furthermore, the actors’ understanding of equality in partnership which embraces equality in terms of abilities and capacity, are also factors that can promote acceptance and sustainability. The collaborating partners in the partnership gave evidence of commitment and willingness to
go into in-depth exploration of issues and problem-solving in their specific areas of competencies to support each other’s learning process and development.

“We shall not cease from our exploration
And at the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time”

-T.S. Elliott
7. Notes


5 Paul Baran’s seminal work, “The Political Economy of Growth” (1957) is one of the major influences on dependency theory.


8 The five pillars of the Cotonou Agreement/partnership are: a comprehensive political dimension, participatory approaches, strengthened focus on poverty reduction, a new framework for economic and trade cooperation, and a reform of financial cooperation.


10 This is a feature in the “Country Strategy for South Africa, 2004-2008”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

11 During the period 2003-2005, sport sector was not represented among these projects. The municipalities believed that they have achieved what is to be achieved in that area during the first period 1999-2002.

12 The Management Committee of NM MMM consists of local councillors (politicians) and on the Göteborg side, the committee was headed by the Managing Director of Business Region. This committee also had a monitoring function for the joint ‘waste environment and transportation projects’ which had fundings outside the partnership.

13 Emitai Etioni (1961:12) argued that there are 3 fundamental types of incentives and motivations involved in the formation and perpetuation of organizations.

14 The term capacity is broadly defined by UNDP as: the ability of individuals, organisations and society to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve goals. Sida however applies a more limited definition e.g. “the conditions that must be in place, for example knowledge, competence, and effective and development-oriented organisations and institutional frameworks, in order to make development possible”.


Butler and Cantrell are quoted in the reference literature on Trust processes and development.

16 The term ‘broader cooperation’ normally denotes the nature of the new relations. The term is however open to other interpretations, one can read for example Mikael Söderbäcks memo “Breddat samarbete”.

46
To read more on different approaches to learning in different situations, one can for example read, Bowden and Marton, 1998, *University of Learning*, Great Britain, Biddles and Carlsson, J. and Wohlgemuth, L. (eds), *Learning in Development Cooperation*, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International

The partnership has elements of a twinning arrangement, which is defined here “as a cooperation between municipalities based on peer education and a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and experiences” (Sida). More information on twinning, see for example, Johnston, A. and Wohlgemuth, L., *Att utbilda organisationer-kompetens utveckling och institutionell uppväggnad*” in Wohlgemuth, L. (ed.), 1997, *Bistånd på utvecklings vilkor*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainsitutet.

Direct observation with or without the researcher’s participation is discussed in for example Esaiasson, P: et al., (2005), *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. Second edition, Stockholm: Norstedts Juridik, pp 333-344

8. References


Brinkerhoff, J., (2002), *Partnership for international development: Rhetoric or Results*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers


**Internet Websites.**

viewed 2006-05-29
EU commission website:


Other references:
Project reports, Contract, Project Guidelines
APPENDIX (i)

List of People Interviewed

**Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality**

Hester Botha  Deputy Mayor’s Office. Coordinator interviewed 2006-03-30
Karlien de Klerk  Project Leader, Recreation and Culture, interviewed 2006-05-22
Dawn MacCarthy  Project Leader, Head of Town Planning, interviewed 2006-05-12
Done Louw  Project Leader, Tourism Sector interviewed 2006-05-15
Marina de Jager  Project Leader, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Univ. interviewed 2006-03-28
Darryl Smith  Deputy Head of Counselling and Development, interviewed 2006-03-30

**Göteborg Municipality**

Sture Perfjell  Business Region Göteborg, Coordinator interviewed 2006-04-25
Hans Ander  Project Leader, Head of City Planning interviewed 2006-04-21
Madeleine Bergmark  Project Leader, Göteborg City Library, interviewed 2006-04-21
Agneta Danielsson  Sida, interviewed 2006-05-19
Marita Olsson  EU, Commission for European Communities, 2006-05-15

![Diagram of Management Committee and Project Coordination](image-url)

Fig 4.2