Ongoing Evaluation Report

E12 Atlantica Transport and the Sub-Project
Development of a Cross-Border Traffic Strategy

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Summary

The focus of this ongoing evaluation has been the sub-project WP2 within the Interreg project E12 Atlantica Transport, which has been carried out in cooperation between partners along the E12 corridor in Finland, Sweden and Norway, as commissioned by the Kvarken Council, MidtSkandia and Blå Vägen, with Kvarken Council as the leadpart. The ongoing evaluation assignment consisted of participation in workgroup meetings, preparations for said meetings, continuous documentation, analysis, support to project and process management, implementation of analysis workshops, report-writing, and presentation of results of the evaluation.

The report contains a study based on a qualitative method, where data has been gathered through observations from lunch-to-lunch meetings and web meetings; from semi-structured interviews (8) with process and project managers, participants and steering group members; from analysis seminars; and from written documentation. Analysis has mainly been based on previous research into cooperation in strategic networks. Key terms are presented in Model 1.

The work has been influenced by structural factors in the form of participant composition and resources. The workgroup captured several different levels and functions in the organizations responsible for infrastructure and community planning within the E12 region. However, the group failed to include certain key actors such as Trafikverket (the Swedish Transport Administration) and even private businesses. The timetable has been governed by project funding, and the work has often been experienced as hurried, although it has been facilitated by the existence of established social relations and positive experiences from previous collaborations. In addition, the project has included activities of a 'social' nature with the purpose of creating 'team spirit' and a chance for informal discussions. Physical meetings, which have enabled socializing, have been held alternately with web-based meetings. The former has facilitated focus on the task, whereas the latter has been time-saving and cost-efficient. Detailed documentation has contributed to transparency and offered everyone an opportunity to assess the development.

Written supporting documents ahead of meetings have proven to be an efficient way of taking the process forward, because they stimulated reflection and discussion. In process management, it is important to balance initiatives from project and process management to push the process forward in order to offer participants an opportunity to reflect and be creative. It is a difficult balancing act which, nevertheless, has generally functioned well.

The work has been carried out under the influence of external factors at national and regional levels. This has created restrictions e.g. in the form of national strategies, and opportunities e.g. in terms of similar situations in other parts of the country. Furthermore, organizations themselves have influenced the process by giving their representatives a chance to attend meetings and participate in preparatory work. It has also been necessary to tackle certain cultural differences and other differences regarding experiences and perceptions at individual level during the course of the work. Such differences have often led to a much richer view, although they have occasionally been a source of frustration.

The work has brought about a traffic strategy and, in addition, other valuable results. The participants have gained extended networks and an experience of cooperating in a network across national borders, which opens new opportunities for the future. Moreover, it has also been a learning experience for the participants e.g. in terms of ways of working and insight into new perspectives on various issues. The final stage with anchoring and implementation is now ahead. In this regard, the work would have been facilitated by participation from national transport authorities, because anchoring has to be carried out uninterruptedly.

The work with the joint traffic strategy has been unique, since the participants have represented three different countries as well as separate organizations and levels within said countries, and the work process has had parallel top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The complexity has been enormous and the time constraints heavy, meaning that the project's outline, leadership and steering have been of crucial significance. The theoretical cooperation model that was developed was used as an analytical model and can function as a reflection base, "a checklist", and thus support the initiation and implementation of similar complex and strategic cooperation projects.

Background

The ongoing evaluation's focus has been the WP2 sub-project within the Interreg E12 Atlantica Transport project and its goal to develop a joint traffic strategy, which was carried out in cooperation between partners along the E12 corridor in Finland, Sweden and Norway. The overarching cooperation focuses on creating a functional transport corridor for freight and passengers, joint infrastructure strategies for cross-border planning, and future forms of cooperation.

Consulting firm Ramboll carried out a system analysis for the corridor in the WP1 sub-project with the purpose of describing the cross-border transport system's planning preconditions, challenges, and conceivable goals and efforts. The system analysis functioned as a basis for the traffic strategy work and gave a concrete and comprehensive picture of the partnership's planning preconditions, current situation, goals and vision.

The aim was to develop a cross-border traffic strategy for the E12 corridor, stretching from the Norwegian Atlantic coast through Swedish Västerbotten and all the way to Finnish Ostrobothnia. The existing transport system is built on national legal frameworks, needs and purposes, but there is also a long tradition of collaboration along the route. **A joint traffic strategy** was to be developed in order to strengthen cross-border cooperation, bind the region together in a functional way, enable the development of transverse infrastructure solutions and thus increase accessibility between the countries, and together create preconditions for development and growth. The project was commissioned by the Kvarken Council, MidtSkandia and Blå Vägen, with Kvarken Council as the project owner and leadpart.

The organization of WP2 was based on shared project leadership with a project manager in each country (Finland, Sweden and Norway). In Sweden, the person in charge of the project was a project manager and employee at the municipality of Umeå, albeit on loan to the Kvarken Council on 50%, whereas a consultant was employed for the role in Finland. In Norway, the project manager was employed at a municipal development company. A group of politicians was appointed and connected to the sub-project. This group consisted of two Norwegian, one Finnish and three Swedish politicians. In addition, a reference person from Trafikverket (the Swedish Transport Administration) took part in the project. Process management consisted of two consultants with different but complementary skills, one student tasked with documenting all dialogue in detail, and an administrative resource person. A project evaluator also joined the organization, with the task of supporting process and project management by analyzing and evaluating the work process.

Process managers developed an outline of the traffic strategy's work process, inspired by the methodology utilized in similar processes (TRAST, Poly-SUMP and SARETS, see the attached synopsis). Their structure for the joint traffic strategy functioned as a starting point for the work, although it was fleshed out during the work process in the form of headlines, contents and scope.
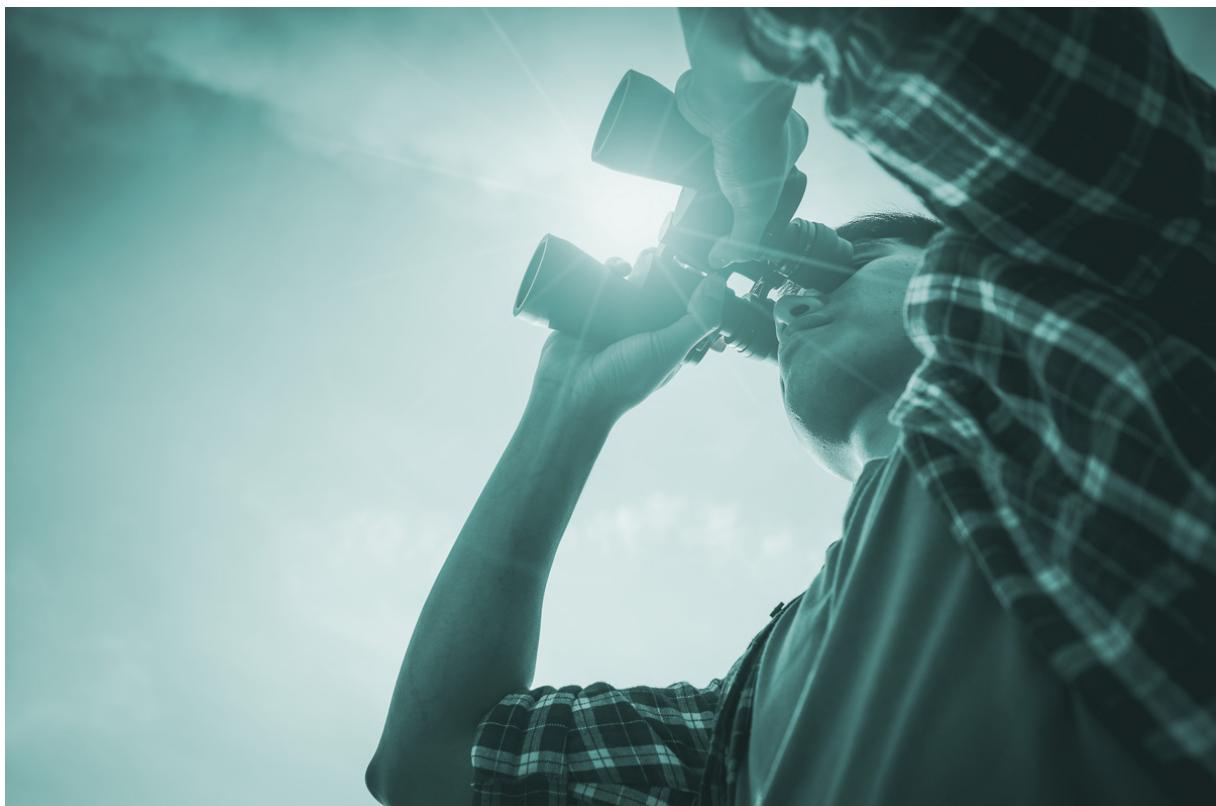
Ongoing Evaluation Assignment

The ongoing evaluation assignment consisted of participation in workgroup meetings, preparations for said meetings, continuous documentation, analysis, support to project and process management, implementation of analysis workshops, report-writing, and presentation of results from the ongoing evaluation. The project evaluator for the project has been Ms Edith Andresen. Ms Andresen is a university lecturer on business economics at CER (Centre for Research on Economic Relations) at Mid Sweden University, focusing on industrial marketing, organization and management of strategic network cooperation, innovation and business model development. The report was co-authored by Ms Heléne Lundberg, docent in business economics at CER at Mid Sweden University, focusing on industrial marketing, network cooperation, internationalization and business model development. The report was based on Processeriet AB's ongoing evaluation assignment in E12 Atlantica Transport, WP2.

Cooperation in Strategic Networks

Companies that conduct business exchange with other companies often choose to cooperate in terms of the formation of processes and products. This has proven to be an efficient way of creating innovations and customer benefits as well as streamlining and lowering the costs of administrative

processes (Bocconcelli & Håkansson, 2008). Changes introduced by companies must be adjusted to existing preconditions in customer and supplier relations, meaning that it is often best to involve them in the process from the start. In addition, this offers an opportunity to learn from one another and coordinate resources. Initiative for change can come from either individual companies or from a business network partner. The incentives can be planned and strategic, but they often occur due to information that has been mediated in the network in an unplanned manner (Gadde et al., 2003).

This form of cooperation in a network structure is often applied to other contexts, where coordination and the utilization of different actors' knowhow is important. Such initiatives in so-called regional strategic networks are often taken by a public organization with the purpose of supporting regional development (Lundberg & Johanson, 2011).

While a company's business relations can be said to represent an organically formed network that has developed during a long time, strategic networks are created on particular occasions and based on specific purposes (Jarillo, 1988; Lundberg, 2008). These networks can e.g. pursue regional development and may have a large number of participants who perhaps are not well acquainted with each other. Therefore, it may be necessary to appoint a process manager to support the process (Andresen, 2011).

Results and models from earlier research into strategic networks were chosen as a starting point for the evaluation's theoretical frame of reference, because the project participants were appointed to represent different countries and activities in joint development work in network-form.

A so-called ARA (Actors-Resources-Activities) model is a central starting point in network research. It highlights three important factors in networks, two of which are structural: (1) what actors are involved, i.e. what is the network's composition; (2) what resources do they possess and contribute to the network; and lastly focusing on the process (3) what activities characterize the network process (e.g. Anderson et al., 1994).

Structural Factors

Network Participants

A network's composition is naturally very important for the kind of resources that the network possesses and for how the process takes form. Several formations are possible, each with its pros and cons. Competitors can sometimes choose to cooperate, something that is called *coopetition* (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). This can happen e.g. when sub-contractors coordinate their activities for a shared customer or see an opportunity to reach a leading position within the branch by joining forces. However, organic networks are dominated by relations between buyers and sellers.

Regional strategic networks often possess a broader purpose and, therefore, attract a larger number of participants. They often aim at innovative thinking, thus preferring a heterogeneous participant composition with varying and complementing skills and resources. However, a disadvantage of this is that it becomes harder to review the network and find mutual ways forward (Andresen et al., 2012).

A heterogeneous network composition, i.e. a network where the participants have different prior knowledge, competencies, nationalities, ages, gender etc., can sometimes impede cooperation because misunderstandings are more common, meaning that achieving consensus is more time-consuming. On the other hand, such groups possess potential for innovative thinking and innovations, since different perspectives and competencies are allowed to clash against each other (Burt, 2004, 2009; Granovetter, 1977), especially if the groups are not too big (Andresen, Lundberg & Roxenhall, 2012).

As a result, the choice of participants becomes an important starting point and should preferably be tailored to the assignment (Ahuja, 2000).

A targeted invitation to a network raises questions about representation or, in other words, about who has the possibility to participate and get their voices heard. Moreover, participation opportunities can vary as some organizations (e.g. small companies) find it more difficult to release staff than others.

Both public and private actors often participate in regional strategic networks – a mix that is less likely in organic business networks. This mixture enables two different cultures to meet. Public services are governed by laws and regulations, which often entail long proceedings and time-consuming decision-making processes – something that profit-oriented companies often interpret as a distraction, since they are used to more streamlined decision-making.

It is also very important to be able to go from words to deeds and that the participants have a mandate to act in the organizations that they represent. Therefore, it is desirable that individuals in leading positions represent the participating actors. This also adds weight to the decisions that are made, both internally in the group and towards external actors (Gebert-Persson, et al. 2010). However, one disadvantage with this is that these persons often have difficulties in freeing up necessary time for the project during and between meetings. As a result, commitment and perceived benefits become key concepts for network cooperation.

There are differences between public and private activities even in terms of quorum. A senior executive in a private enterprise often enjoys considerable authority, whereas a senior executive in public service has more restricted room for maneuver, especially as regards new, innovative and costly solutions that habitually require a political decision before action can be taken. It is imperative to make these kinds of circumstances clear already from the start when creating schedules and expectations.

Lastly, even individual commitment and involvement is very important. It is not just organizations but also individual persons who can function as "driving forces" and inspire others. When someone is "appointed" to represent an organization, this person's personal commitment and involvement can vary greatly. The work is facilitated if persons who are truly interested in the issues are given an opportunity to participate, provided that the decision-making ability does not suffer. However, one representative per organization can contribute to such a solution.

Network Resources

The more participating organizations a network contains, the larger the overall availability of resources becomes both in terms of knowledge and economy. However, this is slightly paradoxical, because objectives usually become more imprecise in large networks as the networks need to adapt to fit more actors – and the further away the objectives are perceived to be from the core activities, the less motivated the participants are to release resources to achieve the goals. Therefore, regional strategic networks may need support from other forms of financing especially in initial stages so as to fund the employment of a coordinating and driving process manager who can inspire and push the process forward.

Well-resourced participants often gain a dominating role. This can manifest positively if these persons are committed and act as "driving forces" and/or legitimize participation in the network merely through their presence (Gebert-Persson, et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there is a risk that these persons become so dominating that they hamper the creativity and involvement of other participants (Håkansson & Ford, 2002).

The participants' abilities, i.e. their human capital (Zheng, 2010) and social capital can also offer important contributions to the process. Social capital is used to denote private and informal relations that create trust and mean that the parties are willing to support each other in different situations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Ferrary & Granovetter, 2009).

Process – Network Activities

A network process consists of preparations before meetings, the meetings themselves, and afterwork. These steps are repeated during several occasions depending on the intentions in terms of the timeframe and scope. A process manager often offers important support during these stages by summoning, planning and preparing meetings, managing the process during said meetings, and handling some of the afterwork in the form of documents and compilations (Andresen, 2011). However, not much can be achieved without the participants' involvement. Lack of involvement often leads to the failure of cooperation endeavors. Therefore, it is important to study the aspects that can increase involvement and commitment among participants in strategic networks (Pesämaa & Hair, 2008; Roxenhall, 2010).

Commitment can have several foundations that do not exclude one another (Roxenhall & Andresen, 2012). Three starting points that are often highlighted (Sharma, Young & Wilkinson, 2006) include (1) *calculative commitment*, which focuses on personal profit and where the participant is likely to ask "what's in it for me?" An actors' desired "prize" can vary; it can e.g. have to do with learning, resources or simply having fun. The second starting point is (2) *moral/normative commitment*, in which the participant feels obliged to participate due to some reason. The third starting point is often called (3) *affective commitment*, in which a participant takes part because they are passionate about the issue and truly want to become a part of the project and contribute to it. Therefore, a project's expected benefits form important grounds for commitment, both at a general and personal level (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Nevertheless, this sometimes presents challenges in strategic networks if the objectives are long-term and often imprecise (Lundberg, 2008).

One often underestimated aspect is that work tends to flow better if it is mixed with fun and stimulating elements. Playful socializing in informal settings helps people to get to know each other in a different and more personal way, which supports relationship-building and creates a feeling of security and trust in the group – this, in turn, facilitates networking (Petelczyc et al., 2018).

Previous studies indicate that well-defined and engaging goals are important. Moreover, the possibility to formulate both short-term and long-term goals is an advantage. When participants work together and achieve a short-term goal, it is a victory that inspires and strengthens further collaboration. In addition, collaboration flows much smoother when there are social relations between the participants, because this constitutes social capital that e.g. enables open and unpretentious communication. For this reason, even occasional informal activities alongside formal meetings can be valuable.

Internal and External Influence – Challenges and Opportunities

Preconditions for strategic network collaboration in terms of innovation and the development of new business models is influenced by external factors, e.g. changes in the environment and among stakeholders. These factors, in turn, can provide possibilities or hinder development. The internal factors of individual actors, e.g. in relation to skills and changes in strategy, also create preconditions for the cooperation process in a corresponding way. Even business model innovation publications note the existence of moderating influencing factors at macro, organizational and individual levels,

with regard to e.g. regulatory frameworks at macro level; estimates, culture and leadership at organizational level; and openness for changes at individual level (Foss & Saebi, 2017).

Leadership in a Strategic Network

Processes in strategic networks are driven and coordinated by one or more persons who form a so-called hub (Jarillo, 1998). Acting as a process manager in a strategic network is a very demanding task. Participants are often numerous and heterogeneous, and they are perhaps not acquainted with each other. On the one hand, this requires sensitivity and a diplomatic ability to accommodate possible conflicting interests and create understanding for the different circumstances that the participants operate in. On the other hand, it demands major commitment and pathos in order to be able to invest energy into the process and push it forward. In this context, a process manager has no control over the participants; instead, the purpose of the task is to facilitate and support the process (Lundberg & Andresen, 2012).

The development of commitment is also influenced by information and the manner and frequency of its distribution (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Therefore, communication skills are highly important in a network leader. A network leader must be able to capture the participants' thoughts and ideas and summarize and mediate their essence back to them in oral and written form (e.g. with meeting notes and reports). This also requires finding a good level of scope and frequency. Good communication skills are often called for also in other contexts where the group's work is reported and possibly influences other processes (Lundberg & Andresen, 2012).

Along the road towards the attainment of goals, a network leader is faced with a difficult balancing act of, on the one hand, devoting time to capturing the thoughts and ideas that are presented during the journey so as to stimulate creativity and, on the other hand, driving the process forward according to an established schedule. Deviating from the schedule implies a risk of not achieving goals within the established timetable, although the reward for this can be a more innovative solution that generates a better result in various respects as opposed to a more narrow and linear path within the timeframe.

Results

Network participants will hopefully reach their goals, although these goals may turn out to be different than initially imagined owing to the fact that target images are usually imprecise from the start and, consequently, will undergo modification and transformation along the way. In addition, the process is difficult to steer and schedule, meaning that it is basically impossible to know in advance what one will achieve and when.

Previous negative collaboration experiences (Faerman et al., 2001) and opportunistic behavior (profiting at the expense of others) (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) hamper the development of cooperation (Lundberg & Andresen, 2011). However, the picture may change and participants who have never participated in this form of collaboration often later report that it has given them an appetite for more and that they are now more knowledgeable in terms of future processes, what can be expected of them, and what factors support the process (Draulans & Volberda, 2003). Accordingly, increased knowledge is an important result of network collaboration.

COLLABORATIVE MODEL 1

LEADERSHIP
- Process management's role and characteristics
- Project management's role and characteristics

STEERING

STRUCTURAL FACTORS
Participants
- Composition
- Representation and roles

Resources
- Financial capital
- Human capital
- Social Capital

PROCESS
- Activities
- Frequency
- Commitment

RESULTS
- Task/goals
- Learning
- Networks

NEXT STEP
- Implementation
- Anchoring

INFLUENCE/CHALLENGES   **INFLUENCE/OPPORTUNITIES**

External- National and regional levels
- Regional and local organizing (regulations)
- Key actors
- Anchoring

Internal- Organizational level
- Organizing

Internal- Individual level
- Cooperation
- Commitment

Internal- Organizational level
- Unanimity and cooperation
- Task/goals

Internal- Individual level
- Social relations
- Will to influence
- Commitment

External- National and regional levels
- Unanimity
- Shared needs
- Anchoring

Methodology

The report follows a qualitative method, which suits the ongoing evaluation's purpose of creating a broad and deep understanding of the factors and connections related to the development process and its network context.

Data has been gathered through *observations* during four (4) lunch-to-lunch meetings and four (4) web meetings by project evaluator Ms Edith Andresen. *Ongoing evaluation observations* were carried out continuously and documented. These notes were then compared to memorandums made by the person responsible for documenting everything that took place during meetings. Data has also been gathered from informal discussions during these meetings, from interviews, in connection with analysis workshops (2), and from distributed supporting material, websites and other available information.

Interviews (7) were carried out with process and project managers, participants and a steering group member. They followed a semi-structured interview guide with questions based on research, primarily in terms of strategic network cooperation. They took circa 0,5–1,5 hours to complete. Four (4) of the interviews were conducted via telephone. Informants were chosen with the help of a process manager and based on their long-time involvement, which enabled them to better view the bigger picture and context.

A small-scale analysis seminar was arranged during a meeting in Vaasa, Finland, and a slightly more comprehensive one during a meeting in Lycksele, Sweden. The results of these were uninterruptedly documented by the person assigned to the task and summarized by the undersigned, projected so that everyone could monitor the work's progress.

The analysis was founded on the theoretical model's themes, which were developed on the basis of strategic network cooperation and complemented with additional factors that were identified in this case.

Case

Structural Factors

Composition of Participants

WP2's traffic strategy workgroup consisted of 20 participants, of which 9 were Swedish, 3 Norwegian, and 6 Finnish – all from the public sector and with different tasks and areas of responsibility related to the development of logistics and traffic solutions. Of the participants, 7 were from municipalities, 8 from regions in the different countries, and 5 from various interest groups. The three commissioning organizations were also represented in the workgroup.

It was about covering the whole route – I didn't think we would be so many – but then it grew. There are three countries and around 20 persons in the group, 6–7 from each country, as well as three cooperation organizations and people who work with traffic issues or people from the economic life who work with such things. …. no companies participated, and we had tough discussions about this. I still think it's a problem. The workgroup is generally speaking quite composed based on the further work. (process manager)

The idea is naturally that the commissioning parties as well as the owners of the regional plans are represented. Then we took the core group from our other work package regarding the traffic strategy – it's rather small – but

we wanted to include the transport administrations' representatives – to join the work and shape the strategy – it was very important, and I mean all the transport administrations. (project management)

Some participants simultaneously represented several organizations, e.g. their own municipality and also one of the cooperation organizations (the Kvarken Council, MidtSkandia or Blå Vägen). The workgroup consisted of 12 men and 8 women with different ages and backgrounds. In addition to the workgroup, all meetings were attended by project and process management, the person responsible for documentation, and the project evaluator.

When asked if the composition of the workgroup's organizations was appropriate, the participants gave different replies. Some viewed that the composition was proper and held a wide range of competencies and experiences, whereas others called for representation e.g. from Nordland County in Norway. In addition, representation from the respective countries' transport administrations was experienced as almost non-existent in the work process, which hindered continuous anchoring. The initial idea was to incorporate Trafikverket (the Swedish Transport Administration) actively in the traffic strategy work, seeing as the strategy was based on their model.

I think that the composition has been pretty good. It's a good mixture of experience, nationalities, gender and personality types. (project participant)

We've had some difficulties with participants from Norway – they've been very positive, but we haven't been able to get them to attend. (project management)

Nordland County is missing. We have one from the Swedish Transport Administration and one from something similar from Finland – this role is missing from all three countries so that we could anchor continuously – so that it's nonstop. (project participant)

The idea was that the Swedish Transport Administration would participate to a larger extent, because our work is based on the Swedish model. (project participant)

Community planning strategists were also missing from the group, along with companies operating along the E12 route. The question about company participation in the workgroup generated some debate among the participants, since the three countries have different ways of working with businesses, and some participants remarked that Finland and Norway work closer with companies than Sweden.

We work with community planning issues, so it would've perhaps been better to involve expert strategists … and the economic life hasn't participated which, in my opinion, is a weakness in the whole project. (project participant)

We work differently with the economic life in the three different countries. Sweden is the weak link in this respect. Norway is much better at this, and Finland as well through VASEK (Vaasa Region Development Company). In Sweden, it's more "we and them" – the public sector on one side and the private on the other. (project participant)

We have continuous meetings with our economic life representatives, and they expect us to bring up things that are important to them – but this is up to the municipalities, and they must develop plans. (project participant, Norway)

Some participants viewed that companies could act as the strategy's consultation bodies, because many of the small businesses do not have sufficient knowhow or abilities to consider the whole route; instead, they are more focused on the part that concerns them. Traffic strategy work is much about strategies, which means that it must inevitably be addressed in public, regional and national transport plans. Nonetheless, company input was deemed important, and this is facilitated if parties who work with traffic planning are close to the companies. Larger companies may have logistics experts who see

and understand the bigger picture, whereas smaller companies were not perceived to have time to participate in these kinds of work processes. Some workgroup members suggested that small companies could be taught how to participate in such work processes, while others did not view this as a relevant task. Some participants stated that companies could have been more incorporated into the traffic strategy work, although not in the workshops; instead, 5–10 companies from each country could have been chosen to answer a questionnaire about their logistics needs. This would have guaranteed good supporting materials for further work. Workgroup participants felt that they represented different actors to the best of their abilities in local-level traffic planning work; they listened and included companies' opinions in the work. It should be noted that some of these views were expressed in Lycksele, Sweden, on 13 February when the traffic strategy work was almost finished and the outline could not be altered.

It has much to do with level. They, mainly haulers, participate in some ÅVS's (Evaluations for Strategic Choice of Measures) but, in my experience, they don't consider the bigger picture and are more interested in one route between the points A and B. If they are involved in the work, they should be logistics experts from larger companies, people who pay attention to more multimodal parts. (project manager)

Companies can partake and offer input, but we must tackle the public planning work. (project participant)

Companies today focus on infrastructure and transports, whereas we work for the future. The question is do they have time for this? … We don't lack these perspectives, because we've met and talked with companies, which means that their knowledge is already incorporated into the plan. (project manager)

I don't think that we should teach the economic life how to act. If we were to teach them, only the big players would have the possibility to take part. (project participant)

In conclusion, the participants disagreed slightly on whether the composition was appropriate or not. Nevertheless, they did not voice crucial criticism and mainly called for more complementing perspectives, and only when asked by the project evaluator. It is always problematic to draw boundaries for these types of workgroups. Small groups offer everyone a better opportunity to get their voices heard, and the costs for various meeting arrangements can be limited. Research into network innovations shows that 20 participants is the limit for functional group dynamics as well as for the development of relations and trust between the participants. The disadvantage of a small group is that fewer people contribute to the process, meaning that important information may not get through or can be overlooked. Therefore, it is important that both participants and project management constantly reflect over other actors that are missing when discussing various issues. This offers the possibility to include them in the process, if necessary, or in some other way obtain their opinions. In this case, the abovementioned was carried out by offering key actors an opportunity to give input during meetings. In addition, the process manager gathered information and discussed with the actors that were missing (e.g. Trafikverket) when necessary.

Representation and Roles

The participating individuals were chosen due to the **roles** that they inhabited in their own organizations. These roles could be connected to the commissioning organizations and also to organizations that work with traffic planning along the E12 route. The group also consisted of municipal, regional and stakeholder organizations, which meant that differences arose in terms of the participating individuals' working environments and decision-making mandates, i.e. their level in the organizations. As a result, the group contained participants from different levels and with varying degrees of experience in operating in contexts outside their own municipalities, regions and countries.

At individual level, it was important to identify key figures with the ability to push the process forward and the courage to act in less politically correct terms.

Everyone must be equal in Sweden – but this isn't about that; it's about finding a couple of key figures who are important for the region – this doesn't mean that others are not as important – everything has to take place in consensus and everyone needs to voice their opinions… perhaps not everyone should participate from the beginning, but instead let it grow. (project participant)

All workgroup members were dedicated to traffic issues, took care to advance the process, and contributed to a positive atmosphere in the group, which was experienced as important in order to together develop a traffic strategy for the E12 route.

Several of the workgroup participants had simultaneous and different roles in the project: some belonged to project management as well as participated in the workgroup. Others represented municipalities or regions and simultaneously answered for or participated in other sub-projects within the main project. Some participants also represented both a municipality and a commissioning organization.

Ongoing evaluation observations from the meetings were that the participants had different preconditions and roles and occupied different levels. Some participants had taken part in various cooperation projects throughout the years and even been active in the project's planning, whereas others were new in the context and needed time to understand the bigger picture, feel ownership, and get into the work process. The workgroup participants who were active, had roles in and were responsible for other sub-projects within the main project and, consequently, had a better overview than others, had also less time to commit to the sub-project and found it harder to limit the task.

Several simultaneous roles can result in role conflicts and make it difficult to differentiate between the roles one acts upon. It is also difficult for a recipient to understand which role the concerned party acts upon, thus creating vagueness and uncertainty and, consequently, obstructing openness in dialogue. At the same time, an individual's possession of several roles grants them a greater overview and a deeper understanding for the process which, in turn, increases contribution opportunities.

Resources

Resources include financial resources that are available in the form of project funding, but also the organizations' funds (*financial capital*), the participants' knowledge and abilities (*human capital*), and established relations, networks and legitimacy to act on the issue (*social capital*).

Financial Capital

The participating public organizations have, in addition to project funding, the resources to drive traffic-related development work forward, because it is largely in their assignment to do so. The parties expressed that collaboration was important, but not so important that they would be prepared to invest their own money. Therefore, collaboration has historically been dependent on external, project-related funds.

The traffic strategy for the E12 region (WP2) was a part of the E12 Atlantica Transport project and financed via EU Interreg and Botnia Atlantica by the concerned regions, municipalities and stakeholder organizations. The financial balance sheet for the W2 sub-project was ….. Project funds have been shared by the organizations in the sense that they have created preconditions for a joint, cohesive, systematic and cross-border development process. Resources have been distributed to two process management persons, one project evaluator, and one person responsible for documentation within the scope of the traffic strategy work. In addition, funds have been allocated to the participants' trips, expenses, accommodation and conference costs.

Public funding is one of the characteristics of strategic networks, because it is precisely the extra contribution of funds which often enables a "hub function" (project and process management) that can be employed to lead and organize the work. At the same time, project funding becomes a determining factor in terms of timescales and even the number of meetings. The development of the traffic strategy within WP2 was delayed by almost a year, meaning that the parties were under pressure due to the project's limited duration and the knowledge about how difficult it is to develop a joint and anchored strategy for various modes of traffic with so many involved actors in a group. Several participants complained of time constraints and voiced a need for more calendar time. *Ongoing evaluation observations*, however, were that the availability of project funding enabled cooperation within the development of a joint traffic strategy – something that would not have come to pass without external funding. The time-limited nature of funding can become a problem if the process itself needs more time but, simultaneously, it contributes to an increased focus, thus enabling the attainment of goals.

Human Capital (Characteristics, Competencies and Abilities)

The participants brought different competencies and experiences into the work, but they were united by a shared competency concerning traffic planning and related strategies. Some had worked at strategic level in earlier cross-border projects, whereas others took part for the first time. Therefore, the awareness of the time-consuming nature of this kind of a process varied.

Several participants felt that the turnover of participants was high, although they simultaneously viewed that the new participants, who had not been involved in the earlier stages of the process, introduced new perspectives to it. New participants also caused the need for a restart, which created some frustration and impatience amongst the initiated participants who perceived that they needed to advance faster in the work.

This group has also seen a high staff turnover. We're not the group we were in the beginning – this has both advantages and disadvantages. One disadvantage is that we must do tie-backs rather often, whereas one enormous advantage is that we get to support and ponder new angles. The newcomers live and work in the region and offer new approaches. (project participant)

We've picked up some persons who have knowledge about issues from the rest of the partnership. Most of whom work with strategic issues connected to the traffic strategy are involved – even if everyone hasn't had the time to participate equally. (project management)

Project and process management could also be viewed as workgroup members, because the human capital they represented contributed to the development. The principal project manager had a background in research, was well-acquainted with regional issues, and had been trained to work in a structured manner. The process manager was a consultant and expert on logistics issues, and he possessed many years of experience on working with traffic-related strategies at national level. In addition, he had considerable experience of cross-border cooperation and national work at department level, also linked to policies, in terms of similar questions. The assistant process manager also had experience of consultancy work connected to traffic issues and of the systematization, continuous communication and administration of project work. The Finnish project manager was a consultant and supplied considerable experience of public transport work connected to cross-border bus transports, logistics and traffic planning. The Norwegian project manager was employed by a municipal development company and new to the role.

The degree of awareness on the advantages that cross-border cooperation could generate for the concerned parties varied between the participants based on the amount of experience they had of similar work. Some needed time and more information about the participating organizations and their preconditions for cross-border cooperation in order to develop such an understanding.

We've talked about why we chose a traffic strategy, and I think that the idea has to be given room to grow – the group is now aware and onboard the idea – I'm actually quite proud of the gang, we lost some tough players and it takes time to replace them – unfortunately, but people say things they didn't before – new ways of reasoning and thinking. (project management)

I don't think that everyone really knew what a traffic strategy was when we started – but it's actually a concrete product, and people are now beginning to understand what it is and that it's not that difficult. (process manager)

Ongoing evaluation observations were that there was a mixture of competencies, experiences and abilities within the heterogeneous group, although all participants focused on infrastructure issues. Heterogeneity is often a strength, bringing about a rich and varied foundation for the generation of ideas. New ideas can contribute to the smooth flow of the process by untying knots that hinder development. However, significant differences can also slow down the process. When all participants do not share the same prior knowledge and experiences, the ones who possess these must "wait up" for the rest and listen and take part in how they process the task and issues, which can be frustrating if it happens too often and for too long. On the other hand, this can create an opportunity for reflection and contribute to the adjustment of old thought patterns, which also happened in this project.

Social Capital

Several workgroup members had participated in previous traffic-related projects and in the process of planning the current project. During this time, they had built up social relations with each other, thus forming trust and social capital which, in turn, created good preconditions for the work with the joint traffic strategy.

The cooperation between the Kvarken Council, MidtSkandia and the E12 Alliance on the Swedish side (Blå Vägen) forms the cornerstone. These organizations are owned by municipalities and have representatives in steering groups, meaning that comprehension and ambitions in terms of the project have been quite clear. (project participant and steering group member)

Social capital also included one process manager's large network as well as his habit and approach of working across borders at different levels as regards traffic issues, which lay at the bottom of positive experiences from this kind of work. He had also previously worked with the workgroup members in different roles, so there was already confidence in his competence and person. The principal project manager's background in research and academia network also contributed positively to the group. In addition to this, there was a person with an active political background, e.g. as an MP in Norway with focus on infrastructure – a role that had enabled this person to gather a large Norwegian and European network. There were also persons who had worked at a regional level with traffic issues for a long time and, as a result, had amassed a considerable network within the field. These networks functioned as a resource when identifying relevant persons with important input for the meetings, but also for consolidating and anchoring the continuous work with the traffic strategy. The main project's commissioners were three network organizations that work across borders (the Kvarken Council, MidtSkandia and Blå Vägen), and they were represented in the workgroup by representatives who knew each other well from before, thus bringing considerable social capital to the group. Reference group members brought their competence, networks and legitimacy to the work.

One ongoing evaluation observation from the meetings was that the participants who had previously worked together (the representatives of the project's commissioning organizations) were close-knit

and had great confidence in each other. Consequently, it was easier for them to partake in the discussions, and they could relate to shared experiences from previous collaborations and even oppose one another without anyone taking offence. There was initially a "we and them" gap, and the new participants seemed to feel out of place and were relatively quiet. This changed during the course of the project, partly because members of this "core group" did not always have time to participate. Network research has also shown that established relations facilitate cooperation in many ways. Trust and social relations create e.g. a bigger willingness to compromise, which leads to fewer conflicts and misunderstandings in the group. In other words, cooperation is easier when group members already have social relations. However, this implies that the feeling of community is not exclusive, so that others do not feel left out.

Process

Outline/Forms of Meetings

The process has encompassed four (4) lunch-to-lunch meetings, four (4) web meetings in between, and a final conference in Vaasa, Finland, on 14–15 March 2018, where the final traffic strategy was to be presented. Initial planning encompassed four (4) lunch-to-lunch meetings and three (3) web meetings.

Meeting 1 was organized in Sandnessjøen, Norway, on 29–30 August 2017, with 24 participants.

The first day's theme was work processes for the traffic strategy. After an initial presentation round, Mr Jerker Sjögren led an exercise that inventorized expectations ahead of the joint work. Some had

great expectations that were more focused on learning, understanding and developing competencies in others. Others emphasized expectations such as contributing to social change, creating a joint strategy, and doing things differently. Some participants wanted to make a difference, witness the benefits of the final product, reach the finish line, and continue with the good collaboration they had experienced earlier.

After this, the assistant process manager followed with the presentation "From System Analysis to Traffic Strategy" together with the principal project manager. Afterwards, Mr Ulf Pilerot from Trafikverket illustrated what others had done and the methods they had used. The project evaluator talked about collaboration in the traffic strategy work, of challenges and opportunities, and inventorized rules for this during a small group assignment. The process manager later went through the goal map of the system analysis, followed by group reflections.

Most of the participants went on a sightseeing excursion in the afternoon on a rigid-hulled inflatable boat in the windy but fantastically beautiful archipelago. The evening was concluded with dinner.

The second day began with reflections on the activities and discussions from the day before and continued with Vision 2040 and the traffic strategy's framework, with subsequent group dialogue in accordance with the World Café model in assigned groups. The group dialogues were full of energy, but the results were sprawling, and some participants worried about how process management could summarize the results. Lastly, portal goals and goals from the system analysis were discussed before lunch and departure.

Ongoing evaluation observations carried out in connection with the presentations were that the presentations were formal and showed little of the private, and that this should be worked on a little more next time. Many participants seemed fragmented, and they occasionally reverted to their laptops and mobile phones. Both process and project management invited people to partake in the dialogue, which worked well.

When thinking about the previous discussions on the following day, it transpired that the participants felt that they had learned a lot and that the workshop's contents were slightly eclipsed by the marvelous afternoon boat excursion, but that the trip played an important part in getting to know one another and the different regions. The 'checkout' of the participants was dropped, and they were given some homework for the next meeting.

Web meeting 1 was organized on 12 September between 10.00–12.00 in the morning and 13.00–15.00 in the afternoon. The meeting focused on the vision and goals for the domains of collaboration, as well the structuring of work ahead of the next meeting.

Meeting 2 was organized in Umeå, Sweden, on 3–4 October 2017, with 16 participants and low representation from Finland.

The theme for the second meeting's first day was efficient and sustainable freight transports. The participants were seated at round tables and worked on issues connected to goals, measures and cooperation partners. Mr Mikael Lind from the Viktoria Institute (RISE) and his colleague, Ms Taline Jadaan from Umeå University, provided input on the themes of digitalization and transports. The first presentation was very interesting, but Mr Lind, who participated via an online connection, talked so fast and in such scientific terms that it was difficult to keep up. His colleague, on the other hand, was physically present and thus easier to follow. Ms Jadaan talked about digital infrastructure connected to logistics and the challenges that it presents, with real-life applications, in such a laudable way that was easy to grasp and appreciated by many. The process managers had produced good supporting materials for this meeting to facilitate group discussions. The presentations were followed by group

discussions, but many participants were tired at this point, and the process managers had to instill some energy into the group to keep the discussions flowing.

The evening was concluded with dinner and a music quiz led by the process managers.

The second day's theme was physical transport structure and digital infrastructure. When pondering on the previous discussions, only two participants chosen by a process manager were given the chance to share their opinions. The lack of representation, i.e. the absence of many workgroup participants was highlighted as a problem, but the participants also commented that the digitalization research presentations from the previous day were very interesting. After this, the participants were divided into groups to work with issues concerning goals, measures and cooperation partners. The assistant process manager emphasized during the summary that it perhaps felt like they were dabbling with minor issues in the strategy, but that it actually was the strategy and that it was important to understand it. The evening was concluded with an outlook into the future and dialogue about homework.

Ongoing evaluation observations from the first day were that the field was complex and experienced as difficult, discussions were conducted on various levels, and the participants needed process support to move forward with their dialogue. The discussions held more energy on the second day, but the process manager's large involvement and competence rendered him more of an interlocutor than a discussion leader. A positive aspect of this is that it instilled energy and drove the process forward. A negative aspect is that it reduced the participants' responsibility. A proven way to increase energy in such network cooperation is to allow all participants time to reflect over the process and day, both at the end of the first day and at the beginning of the second one. In this way, all participants can be seen, and there is room to analyze and formulate, which gives an opportunity to take greater responsibility and ownership of the process.

Web meeting 2 was organized on 31 October between 10.00–12.00 in the morning and 13.00–15.00 in the afternoon. The meeting focused on Vision 2040 and the contents of the large domain for collaboration – transport and infrastructure development – and also on the continued work with the goal map (goals, measures, cooperation partners), the dialogue concerning the traffic strategy's first draft, and program suggestions for the subsequent meeting in Vaasa, Finland.

Meeting 3 was organized in Vaasa, Finland, on 21–22 November 2017, with 21 participants.

The theme for the third meeting's first day was work with efficient and sustainable passenger transports, goal maps (goals and measures), and cross-border infrastructure planning. Ms Linda Gustavsson, gender equality strategist at the municipality of Umeå, provided input on horizontal criteria. After this, the participants took part in a workshop about horizontal strategic issues connected to equality, community planning and social issues in country-by-country groups. This was followed by discussions concerning competence issues and competence provision connected to public transportation.

The evening was concluded with dinner and a smoke sauna in a fantastic location in the outer archipelago for those who were interested.

The second day began with recollections of the previous day's activities and discussions, and two participants were once again chosen to voice their opinions. After this, the participants received presentations from Mr Rauno Matintupa about public transportation and MaaS (Mobility as a Service), Ms Heli Siirilä from the University of Vaasa's Levón Institute about transports in sparsely populated areas, and Mr Sture Uff concerning China's new roads for freight transports into the wider world. All presentations were inspiring and injected a great deal of energy into the subsequent

groupwork concerning the vision, cooperation partners, implementation, indicators and development of a collaboration structure for the E12 region. A short group exercise was afterwards carried out with focus on the follow-up of the process. The evening was concluded with a summary, an outlook into the future and dialogue about homework before lunch and departure.

One ongoing evaluation observation carried out in connection with the first day's equality exercise was that equality could have been discussed more from a viewpoint of women as users and from a sustainability perspective, which also includes economy. However, the group discussions did not lack energy or laughter. The second day began with technical difficulties due to a lack of extension cords and a weak internet connection in the conference room. Many participants initially seemed to be online and connected, but this varied during the day. The process manager eagerly wanted to nail the targets but could not quite achieve this. Whereas the system analysis was marked with prevailing system rhetoric, the traffic strategy work was to be based on people's needs, thus making it more difficult.

Web meeting 3 was organized on 12 December between 10.00–11.30 in the morning and 12.30–15.00 in the afternoon. The meeting focused on Vision 2040, the work with goal maps for passenger transports and equality, as well as planning for the continued work, the next web meeting, the subsequent workshop in Lycksele, Sweden, and the final conference in Vaasa, Finland.

Web meeting 4 was organized on 29 January between 10.00–11.30 in the morning and 12.30–15.00 in the afternoon. This extraordinary web meeting focused on the review and work concerning the traffic strategy document based on a draft that had been sent to the participants by process management ahead of the meeting. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were discussed.

Meeting 4 was organized in Lycksele, Sweden, on 13–14 February 2017, with 21 participants.

The first day's theme was working meetings, this time without external presentations. However, the meeting began with a mini-seminar with the project evaluator. The results of this are displayed further in the report. This was followed by reviews and dialogue in groups concerning a new traffic strategy draft, chapters 1–4.

The evening was concluded with dinner and an inspirational lecture.

The second day began with reviews and dialogue concerning the traffic strategy draft, chapters 5–6. The work was then summarized. Project management shared information about the final conference, and the continued work was discussed before a group photo, lunch and departure.

Ongoing evaluation observations from this meeting were that the energy level was high, the discussions concrete, and the participants felt that they made progress and advanced in the process.

Reflections from project and process management and the workgroup on the outline and forms of meetings connected to the development of a joint traffic strategy.

The materials displayed below were produced in group discussions during an analysis seminar in Lycksele, Sweden, on 13 February and during parts of the interviews that were carried out. The

following section displays answers to questions about involvement and the program outline's contribution to the attainment of goals.

The lunch-to-lunch concept was considered positive because, for many participants, it enabled working at the home front before travelling to the meeting and, respectively, also after returning home. A fast tempo was initially seen as advantageous because it reduced time between the meetings and, therefore, it was easier to remember what was discussed. The project's delayed start also affected the tempo, and much had to be done under a short amount of time. A disadvantage with the outline was that the fast tempo did not give participants time between the meetings to prepare and deliver texts or viewpoints to the joint strategy. This, in turn, could result in the occurrence of "errors and omissions" in the form of deficient or unrefined documents that had to be handled at the next web meeting or that would hang around for the remainder of the project.

The outline had a relatively loose structure, which enabled the use of previous results, documents, reports, etc. as support material, and to summarize these and use them as an aid to direct the cooperation constellation's gaze towards 2040 and the joint strategy. It was about *"getting down on paper what they've done and with a clear direction forward" (process manager).* One project participant remarked that sometimes *"it feels like we've prioritized wrong things and that we should instead take action and make sure that we're going in the direction that we want and work with what's important"*. The participants felt that some parts swallowed up too much time, but they did not want to blame the process managers or what happened during meetings; instead, they would have wanted the outline to be structured in such a way that it would have allowed more time on the home front for preparations and anchoring. The participants worked with the traffic strategy in parallel to their other assignments, and several of them remarked that it was difficult to free up time for the project.

Some workgroup members commented that the meetings were exciting and time-efficient, and they also experienced a feeling of togetherness and of being able to contribute. The inclusion of continuous consolidation was also viewed positively. The lunch-to-lunch concept gave time for the participants to become closer to each other, which the project management considers to be time well invested. Several participants commented that the evening activities were important for the creation of good team spirit which, in turn, also affected the results. Some participants said that it felt good to have scientific facts proving the importance of having fun in this type of a cooperation process. On the other hand, there were some who thought that the social activities stole too much attention, because they had participated in such activities previously and knew each other well. However, they understood that these were important for the integration of new members into the group. Overall, the outline has created preconditions for the participants to better see and understand what they can expect from each other as well as what can be done on the home front, in management groups, and as regards policies, external actors and bordering routes. Moreover, the participants also felt that they had several competitors whom they would now rather consider cooperation partners. The group also wanted *"to give roses to the administrative staff"* who took care of all the practical matters concerning travelling and conferencing, both of which are important preconditions in this concept.

The outline of the lunch-to-lunch meetings has entailed long travels for many participants due to the existing infrastructure's national focus, which does not always facilitate transverse travelling. Therefore, some workgroup participants remarked that it was important to adjust the outline so that the most important issues were addressed on the morning of the second day, when all participants have had time to rest.

Ongoing evaluation observations in connection to the physical meetings were that these meetings were time-consuming due to large geographical distances and the lack of time-efficient travel opportunities. However, participants benefited from undisturbed work and focus on the process as well as an opportunity for informal and relaxed socializing during the evenings. This facilitated the development of social relations and trust which, in turn, opened dialogue and built confidence between the

participants. Shared and enjoyable experiences contribute to the establishment of 'team spirit' and, consequently, to a feeling of shared responsibility for the process and results. In addition, this has granted the possibility to reflect over the first day's events ahead of the second day. Presentations during the meetings have helped to broaden perspectives as well as instill energy and inspiration into the group and, accordingly, advance the work process.

The purpose of **web meetings** was to perform a check-up and remind the participants of what had been done, which was generally perceived to function well – although not always. Small organizations that have several tasks distributed to few persons have benefited from web meetings, because these meetings have given them a chance to participate and contribute much more than previously, since they have not had an equal possibility to take part in time-consuming lunch-to-lunch meetings. The agenda was often clear, and most of the participants felt that they had a role in the joint work. However, several participants remarked that there were many disturbances during these meetings, e.g. when someone entered the office, which caused the participants to easily "*lose the plot*". The participants did not think that the involvement was as big during web meetings; instead, there was more drive when they met physically. Risks with technology were highlighted, likewise the importance of everything running as smoothly as possible with such long distances. The technical solution was relatively easy to handle, and problems were solved with the help of a pedagogical manual and support from process management, if necessary. As a result, the participants commented that it worked well and that the majority of the group was able to attend. However, web meetings were occasionally experienced as too lengthy, making it difficult to maintain concentration levels. One participant commented that a solution would be to create a narrower agenda in combination with more defined and previous homework. This would have put more pressure on all by producing a feeling of responsibility and clarifying contribution requirements, thus supporting delivery.

The working method during the last lunch-to-lunch meeting and the last two web meetings, which were all based on a strategy draft as dialogue framework, was seen as positive because it enabled a larger focus on improvements as well as the observation of results. Nevertheless, the outline required the existence of hard-working writing groups that summarized the received suggestions and converted them into text in the traffic strategy.

One ongoing evaluation observation from the web meetings was that there was a well-defined agenda and explicit homework. Experiences of vagueness could stem from the fact that the work was initially at an abstract level connected to the development of the vision and portal goals, which possibly lay outside many of the participants' area of operations and, as a result, was not easy to handle or feel commitment towards.

The web meetings were time-efficient from a travel-perspective and gave several participants an opportunity to attend. They did not, however, contribute to the creation of social relations. Therefore, the mixed outline can be seen as a good compromise; possibly with greater emphasis on the social parts at the beginning of the project that lay the foundation for further work.

What Created Commitment?

During an ongoing evaluation workshop, one group listed factors that create commitment: new initiatives, events outside their own region that created an incentive to cooperate, visible results from work efforts, and the welcoming of new actors into the traffic strategy work. In addition, the development of a shared perspective, a good story, as well as the ability to tell about this at the final conference were seen as commitment-inducing factors.

Another group commented that their commitment increased when they gained more understanding on what it is to work with community planning and that it does not only concern infrastructure and transport, but also the well-being of people. Since the joint work led to the development of a long-term

strategic plan, they had the energy to work much harder. They were also able to see that they created a foundation that enabled further work. The fact that the participants formed such a wide selection of broad expertise was seen to create commitment.

A third group stated that they had received new perspectives, which made working much more exciting. They mentioned as an example Storuman, a Swedish municipality bordering Norway and a region that can be considered a backwater. Nonetheless, the traffic strategy work put Storuman at the center of the route, thus providing enormous possibilities and simultaneously demanding functional dialogue between the parties. The project's exercises were considered to have increased this ability.

Ongoing evaluation observations carried out in connection to commitment were that commitment was initially experienced as low due to the fact that many new participants did not know how to relate to each other or the task. However, commitment increased as the participants got to know each other and the task became clearer. Clarity is here used to denote how close the goals and measures are to a participant's own area of competence or operations. Closeness increased the experience of relevance and meaningfulness, when it became easier to understand the benefits that could arise from a joint traffic strategy for a participant's own organization and tasks.

Descriptions reflect the importance of having a group composition with competencies that can push the work forward. They also show the value of both short-term and long-term attainment of goals. Long-term goals can be seen as hard to reach, which means that the attainment of sub-goals within less time increases commitment. Lastly, the participants' replies show that commitment is also created at a personal level, not least via experiences of one's own learning and new perspectives.

What Reduced Commitment?

Commitment was reduced in situations where the participants felt that they did not have an opportunity to do what they could, because something else got in the way. The participants' many parallel tasks made commitment difficult despite ambitions, since there were other things that also had to be done. Activities that were perceived to reduce commitment included reporting, staff turnover, and person-dependent tasks.

One ongoing evaluation observation connected to commitment was that the lack of time was naturally frustrating and hampered commitment to the task. Therefore, it is up to the organizations who appoint the participants to actually free up time for them to partake in the project – if the task is considered a priority. Changes in group composition always create some disarray, also in this case. New participants can offer important contributions, but it always takes some time before they get up to speed with the work. Therefore, it is important that the participating organizations think long-term when choosing their representatives, so that unnecessary representative reshuffling can be avoided. This can, however, be difficult for small organizations with high staff turnover. Continuity and reduced person-dependency can be created by appointing several representatives who share the task, constanstly reporting and discussing with each other. The demand to handle additional administrative tasks on top of one's own assignments, especially when the cooperation task and its relevance for one's own work is unclear, can also reduce commitment. Consequently, an important factor that facilitates the feeling of commitment is connected to the experiences of benefits and the sharing of fundamental values.

Communication and Documentation

The principal project manager came up with the idea of hiring a student to document everything, which the process manager considered to be a "*stroke of luck*". All discussions and presentations have been documented in full detail with reference to who said what, and the texts have been reviewed by the process manager. Some texts were sent to the participants in order to receive clarification to what

was said. All documents from lunch-to-lunch meetings and web meetings were afterwards sent to all workgroup members. The minutes have been extensive, with 32–43 pages of text per meeting from physical meetings, and 22–36 pages of text from web meetings.

In addition, process management has provided the participants with support materials to acquaint themselves with ahead of all meetings and web meetings. Documentation has focused on the traffic strategy, illustrating support materials and suggestions for how it could be formulated. Participants sometimes received the minutes and support materials only a few days before the meetings, and some workgroup members remarked that this was too late because they were very busy and would have needed more time to acquaint themselves with the materials. It is worth noting that the meetings took place within a short timeframe, meaning that there was not much time for preparations and dispatches.

The traffic strategy work's outline was based on the assumption that workgroup participants would commit to the project and contribute as co-authors. Process management voiced their frustration during the process over the lack of incoming text contributions. The strategy was changed after a meeting in Umeå, Sweden; instead of waiting for input from the workgroup, management decided to actively prepare drafts for the writing of different chapters. These drafts were then sent out as support materials ahead of each meeting so as to increase the tempo of the writing process. This proved out to be a successful strategy, because it was easier for busy participants to take a stand on a text and come up with improvement suggestions than write something from scratch. On the other hand, this could be seen as an act of steering, since the process managers decided what would be commented on, based on Ramboll's system analysis.

Ongoing evaluation observations connected to communication were that documentation was valuable, because it allowed those who could not attend an opportunity to follow the discussions so that they would not feel left out. This way of documenting the process created transparency which, in turn, contributed to opening dialogue and formed a practical example on how to operate with trust, thus creating the very thing. At the same time, there were extensive documents to acquaint oneself with, which meant that some participants chose not to read them. Nevertheless, the documents were a valuable source for the ongoing evaluation, since it allowed focus on observations and reflections, hence avoiding some descriptive details.

Frequency and Tempo

The participants had slightly varying answers when asked if the sub-project maintained the intended tempo. The process manager thought that it did and that process management had the ability to read signs and adapt if the participants showed signs of boredom or if things progressed too quickly. The process manager viewed that the outline gave the participants preconditions to cope with their own work in parallel to the project work, and that they were given enough time to digest what was said and done before the next meeting as well as to reflect over matters between meetings – something that was considered important.

However, project management thought that things had progressed a bit too quickly but, at the same time, noted that it is the way of these processes. One participant commented that the work process was too slow, although s/he was simultaneously uncertain whether a faster tempo as regards project work and other parallel work would have been manageable. S/he viewed that it was an enormous challenge to run everything in project-form and only have a limited amount of time available; instead, s/he stated that the project work would have required six months because no-one worked with the traffic strategy full-time.

The process manager was satisfied with most of the issues when asked what worked well and according to *expectations*. The project manager initially thought that the tempo would increase towards

the end, but he had expected more action. In the beginning, he felt that there were engaged discussions, but that the level of these caused it. However, the work process was considered good for the group, with the potential to strengthen the participants, and the participants had evolved throughout the project and were more committed and felt more "ownership" of the process than before. The process manager emphasized the importance of having respect for the difficulties involved in working in such cooperation processes and the need for patience, connected to time for implementation. More time could have reduced the tempo to some extent but, on the other hand, long meetings could have diminished interest in participation.

These are difficult processes, you have to accept that and have patience – maybe we could do something about the schedule, but if we allow too much time they might not attend – this could pose a risk … you have to keep an open mind for changes in plans and have a buffer for this, without misleading the participants. (project manager)

Process management viewed that most things had proceeded according to expectations, although the commissioning organizations' role as co-creators in the process could have been clearer and larger. Co-creation is here used to denote the contribution to produce something from scratch, as well as adjusting and commenting on suggestions. The experience was that the project would have needed "*some frames and streaks on the canvas*" so as to contribute, and that the focus had been more on further development than co-creation. If process management would have been aware of this from the start, they could have possibly started with a slightly different outline. However, they acknowledge that a learning process has taken place, and note that sometimes processes just need to be allowed to carry on.

It's impossible to know everything from the start – perhaps then we wouldn't have given them a blank sheet – there were discussions, but they didn't really move us forward. (process manager)

The participants had different expectations, some lower and others higher. Some remarked after a while that everything had worked OK, whereas others thought that it took a long while to get going. The main project had been running for almost a year before the work with the development of the traffic strategy started. This work could not begin sooner due to the delayed system analysis.

The consultant who became a process manager was contracted in the autumn of 2016 for coordinating tasks, which included e.g. responsibility for the production of the traffic strategy in close cooperation with a traffic strategy expert from Trafikverket. The aforementioned expert had e.g. led the work with SARETS. However, it became clear in early 2017 that Trafikverket's role would be reduced to that of a sounding board and reference person. At the same time, WP2's manager resigned his/her municipal employment and the position as WP manager. This prompted the principal project manager to assume responsibility for WP2 at the same time as the coordinator became the process manager and hired a local sub-contractor as an assistant process manager.

Several participants were pleased with this solution, because the project received consultants with major competence within the field as well as large networks. However, one participant stated that a disadvantage with this solution was that the consultants began to lead the work as opposed to the commissioning organizations themselves.

We need to focus more on the organizations' work with and feeling of ownership – that we do this together and stand together – we lose a bit of local anchoring if we hire consultants – it leads to longer roads to decision-making. Politicians regard it differently if it comes from consultants as opposed to their own staff – if consultants lead the work, they need persons inside the municipalities. (project participant and commissioner)

Another participant remarked that it was difficult to be happy with everything, but that this sub-project had worked relatively well compared to others.

Ongoing evaluation observations connected to tempo were that both project and process management as well as participants were often forced to operate within the project's framework and based on the available resources, rather than based on what the task required. The project-type is unfortunate in this respect. At the same time, the distant horizon is a clear finish line that can contribute to tasks not fizzling out, which was also the case with the traffic strategy work, where the relatively high tempo – in addition to causing frustration – also prompted a heightened focus amongst the participants at a later stage. Experiences from strategic network processes concerning cooperation with interregional and intermunicipal tasks highlight that tempo and time are linked to frequency and space. Frequency and continuity are important, and the outline is here in line with what was found to be successful earlier. As regards time and space, the perception of time would have been different (for good and bad) if the participants had known from the start that there was certain room to increase the number of meetings. Network contexts may require at least six (6) lunch-to-lunch meetings (KrAft) in under a year to land expected results.
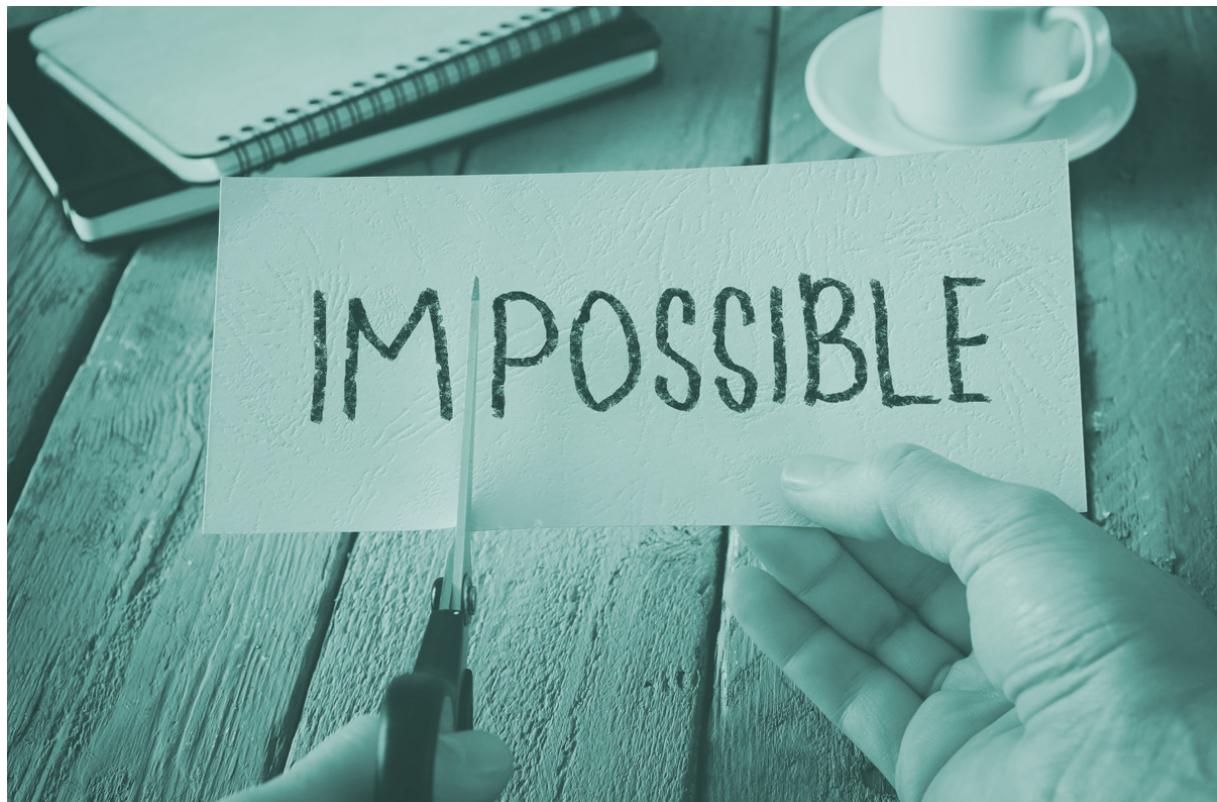
Influence & Challenges

The following chapter presents and discusses external, group-internal and individual challenges linked to participation in the work process. These challenges shaped the process but also arose as a result of it.

External – National and Regional Levels

Regional/Local Organizing (Regulations), Key Actors and Anchoring

The main project, similar to the traffic strategy sub-project, encompasses three countries. Therefore, cooperation is necessary in order to adjust the need for measures in the three countries with different

preconditions. Cross-border collaboration has been historically seen as important, although not important enough for individual actors to contribute with their own funds, meaning that collaboration has largely depended on project funding. Challenges arising from this are the regulations and policies that govern external, EU-related financing.

Another challenge in the joint traffic strategy work was the relation to the main project, E12 Atlantica Transport and its context, which encompassed international (EU), national and border-related regulations within the EU and the cooperating countries. In addition, it was necessary in the task to relate to key actors (companies) and inhabitation along the E12 route, as well as to regional and local institutions that work with regional development, coordination, infrastructure and other community planning. The traffic strategy needed to be adjusted to existing regulations, practices and policies linked to the development of traffic-related strategies at a national level in three countries, but also to their regional and local activities. Other problems were connected to the lack of financing possibilities as regards the development of transverse traffic solutions. In addition, the E12 route is limited in terms of the number of individuals, and the 150 000 inhabitants that are expected to make good use of the route are too few for it to become economical to finance development. Regulations, policies, preconditions and key actors all directly and indirectly influenced, to some extent, the progression of the work process and involved adjustment to the existing work, as well as the continuous anchoring of results. Several organizations are represented in the workgroup, although some were missing (e.g. the transport administrations of all three cooperating countries). Quite a few workgroup participants commented that the continuous anchoring was insufficient.

I also want to remind you that we've emphasized many times how important it is that you talk with friends and politicians at your home front so as to anchor what we've discussed here. This is a question that you can ask yourselves, have I done this? Have I seized the opportunities at the municipal office? I ask this because I don't know the answer. (process manager)

One particular challenge in cooperation was that some of the workgroup participants represented regions and other border organizations, because the formal regions in the three countries differ. Three cooperation platforms were to cooperate, which is/was difficult and a major challenge according to the process manager, because tensions in the respective countries' regions also influenced the cooperation. Helgeland, a part of Nordland County in Norway with Bodø as its provincial capital, was mentioned as an example. Helgeland's involvement in the route is considerable and the region's actors want to steer the development themselves, which is why they did not have a problem shouldering the region's role in the workgroup. Another explanation for the lack of participation from Norway's regional level is that there had been a high staff turnover in the county municipality and, as a result, project cooperation was not prioritized. This became a problem in relation to Finland and Sweden, since both countries had their regional levels represented in the workgroup.

It's been difficult to involve Norway's regional level the whole time – there's been a high staff turnover in the counties and regions, and it's been problematic to familiarise with the task – difficult to prioritize. They've also had difficulties in understanding the geography because they're on the outside. (project participant)

I got the impression that Norway is the weakest link in this due to confusion on the home front – Nordland versus Helgeland. (process manager)

Helgeland inhabited a role as a region simultaneously as Nordland County constituted the formal regional level – there was some miss-match, but there's also commitment in Helgeland as a sub-region – and the formal came a little after and we're handling it in two ways – as a regional council we've taken on some of the county municipality's role, because it's been necessary in order to move forwards in the process, seeing as Nordland County has not had the same commitment. (project participant and steering group member)

The lack of regional involvement from companies was not a problem because the county municipality was situated further away from the economic life than Rana Utveckling and the municipality of Helgeland. Proximity to companies and key factors in general was considered good.

Another example of a challenge that the process manager connected to the collaboration between the three cooperation platforms was Northern Sweden and its constant and sometimes tough strife between the coast and the inland. A third example was Finland and its bilingualism. In addition, there was also a conflict between the outskirt and the center; everyone had a fight with the capitals, which were regarded as groups of external enemies that the peripheral regions could unite against. In view of these preconditions, cooperation was overall perceived to have functioned well.

One participant commented that proximity to companies was the biggest challenge on the Swedish side. The absence of the economic life from the formation of the project was seen as a deficiency. The group that initiated the project should have been active and "*scouted the atmosphere before inviting actors*", but it was difficult to gain support for this because the planning group included officials who wanted to maintain control as well as politicians without experience of dealing with the economic life. It was also generally felt that the cooperating parties are now more mature for economic life integration than at the start of the project.

It's about a lot of things – officials who are afraid of losing control, politicians who don't have close relations with the economic life or aren't brave enough – afraid of distributing resources unfairly or attracting criticism, and it can also be about fear and timing ahead of an election year. But I think that we're mature enough for it now to a greater extent. (project participant)

Reconciling the needs of all the cooperating parties at the start of the project was a challenge, because the project was preceded by a tough political battle concerning its organization and integration of the researcher-driven part. There was some tension between the chosen research institute and some of the municipalities. The principal project manager was in a pinch because he came from this environment. The tension came down to access to resources. Municipalities felt that they would be left with nothing if the institute got what it wished for. This led to a confrontation, and the solution was to give the institute responsibility for their own part within WP2. Something that possibly contributed to the tension was that key actors saw it as a challenge in the first project plans to build up a competence center around logistics in Mo i Rana, Norway. This fell through due to uncertainties concerning funding, and the competence center was placed in Umeå, Sweden, and Bodø, Norway.

People are prone to think about borders and their own nations, and politicians are so inclined to worry about election results, not about people moving freely – egos at the center. (project manager)

A major challenge was also linked to the traffic strategy's distribution in order for it to become an instrument that could steer infrastructure.

Overall, these comments show that the project is not self-steering; it is also dependent on its surroundings as well as support and resources before and during the process, e.g. in terms of the prolongation of implementation and anchoring.

Internal – Organizational and Individual Levels

The following chapter details the internal challenges at group and individual levels that have influenced the process. The organizational level is about cooperation between the group's actors, whereas the individual level is about challenges connected to cultural differences and commitment, which affects the process.

Challenges Linked to Organizing

One of the previously mentioned challenges was the lack of **time**. In order to tackle this challenge, process management chose to "push on" to reach decisions, which occasionally triggered "opposition" from project management, who thought that more time would have been needed because it was difficult to set levels.

I said from the beginning that people didn't have a chance of forming their own opinions in such a short time. (project manager)

Several participants commented that the project proceeded too slowly, which was initially frustrating and challenging, but they added at a later stage that they needed time because thinking at a strategic level related to various decision-making tiers was complicated. Identifying strategies at different levels and creating understanding around these was problematic. According to the process manager, the deficiencies found in the system analysis should have functioned as a starting point for the work, but this would have required preparations, which also would have been a challenge. Organizing the cooperation was in itself difficult, and the project manager initially assumed that the process managers were tasked with doing more to concretize and aggregate the strategy's purpose and scope. According to project management, some meetings could have been arranged differently and been shorter with perhaps a simpler outline and more steering and support materials to relate to.

In addition, process managers thought that it was a major challenge to "*get as many involved in as much as possible*". Key actors, i.e. persons with mandates that are important for anchoring, have occasionally been absent from meetings, which has impacted anchoring as well as discussions, since these persons are initiated and have much to contribute. Several persons from one country have occasionally been absent from meetings, causing the process to lose their input during these instances and hampering the progress. Process management maintained continuous communication with workgroup participants after it emerged that it was important to urge people to participate and emphasize its importance. Communication with participants and the anchoring of the working method was difficult. It was also challenging to have patience for further work and to try to explain in a pedogigal manner why the project focused on creating goals when the purpose was to develop a strategy.

It's difficult to agree on goals etc. – and it's important to convey to the workgroup that what we invest so much time in is actually minor in the strategy in terms of volume, but that it's the core and the other aspects are only a story that leads to goals and measures. (process manager)

Process management felt that the anchoring work within the participants' own organizations was challenging and did not proceed according to plans. This is also confirmed by a participant who explained that there simply was not enough time and that the focus was rather on the traffic strategy's larger and more overarching issues, stripping away other aspects such as practical and more administrative tasks.

One participant emphasized the significance and challenge of organizing everything so that it created preconditions for creativity, commitment and relationship-building, and that all this needs a driving force. According to the participant, process management could have discussed with strategic persons and obtained supporting materials that could have combined in a summary and tested within a smaller group, and later sent to a broader group. The participant voiced that it would have been easier to receive feedback from initiated persons, because knowledge increases the tendency to respond, and that it is not so simple to receive relevant answers without preparatory discussions.

Long travels were also pointed out as a challenge, despite the fact that they had often been smooth. The lack of passenger transports between Mo i Rana (Norway) and Vaasa (Finland) were disruptive.

Travelling was seen to take up much of the time that should have been devoted to efficient working. The same also applied to **social activities**, e.g. in the form of team-building. There was, however, an understanding for the need of social activities when new participants joined the process.

New people are coming in all the time – so I understand it, but I often think that we could've worked more from home … We could've been more efficient … boat excursions and saunas – well-known activities – have their pros and cons. (project participant)

Web meetings facilitated interaction, but they were also problematic because they required personal relations and trust in project management and participants, as well as an ability to capture what emerged.

Ongoing evaluation observations from the web meetings were that the group's new participants were quiet, whereas the ones who had worked with each other previously easily took the floor and drove the discussions forward together with the process manager. The more people got to know each other, the easier it was to contribute to the dialogue.

Steering group members have had difficulties in understanding project and process management's different ambitions and the various steering mechanisms during the different stages of the work process. Another challenge was linked to the fact that several workgroup participants had double or triple roles in the same work process, and that these participants also had difficulties in separating between the issues and discussions that were included in the traffic strategy work and between those that belonged to other parts of WP2. Participants who had taken part in the planning of the project were more impatient than others, and they wanted to accelerate the tempo. At the same time, they had difficulties with demarcation between all the processes that they participated in and often answered traffic strategy-related questions with things that had happened in other parts of WP2. Process management found it tasking to manage participants who had several roles as well as the key actors who, despite requests, were often absent, which meant that their competence did not contribute to the development work. A recurrent explanation to the absences was that there was something else in their home organization or private lives that was prioritized over the project.

Internal – Individual Level

Challenges Linked to Cooperation and Cultural Differences

A major challenge at individual level was the differences in the group when it came to competencies and experiences, which initially created disjointedness in the discussions because they were conducted at different levels. Another challenge that was identified at individual level was linked to the participants' own **responsibility** in terms of web meetings. Despite long lunch breaks, process management still thinks that the participants focused on other things during the meetings due to other, demanding work tasks. One participant stated that if a participant does not own the process but, instead, feels like a visiting guest, his/her commitment and involvement will undulate and remain on a backburner. The same participant also commented that "*it's not possible to squeeze out that much from people who aren't immediately affected – and this becomes a small dilemma*". Theory and reality do not always go together. For instance, a transport administration can initiate the project, maintain the dialogue, and identify the participants, but things do not always go as planned in the end.

... and then says that everyone has to participate … it's fantastic and accurate in theory, but in reality … it's about making the participants feel that it's both important and fun – we're controlled by our desires. (project participant)

One participant voiced a challenge that is linked to **cultural differences** in the three countries and the obsession that everyone must be equal in Sweden. In order for cooperation to progress, this participant stated that it is crucial to identify some important key persons in the region who can and want to push development further. This does not mean that others are less important. Consensus and involving everyone and hearing their opinions is perhaps not the most important thing from the start, the participant said; instead, these things must be given room to grow.

Ongoing evaluation observations from the meetings linked to cultural differences were that these differences emerged in dialogue and in the way that the participants reacted. Participants from Finland were observed to be quieter than the ones from Norway. Norwegian participants sometimes found it difficult to gain support for their views amongst some of the Swedish participants. Participants themselves also brought up cultural differences as a challenge due to differing approaches. Swedes were seen as more consensus-seeking, talkative and engaging than Norwegians and Finns, who preferred to choose persons to invest in and were not that worried about getting their voices heard (see the chapter on group composition).

According to one participant, it was difficult to **involve** everyone by showing that participation can become an interesting part of life, and that it is possible to contribute and also learn something that is connected to one's own reality. This is connected to the experience of relevance and fun.

One participant commented that there had been a considerable number of meetings within the sub-project and that it had been a major challenge because it had consumed so much time. S/he had wanted to "*reach the finish line*", which had taken a lot of energy and commitment, simultaneously as it had been difficult to see the outcome from the start. *One ongoing evaluation observation* linked to the number of meetings was that the participant in question has been heavily involved also in other sub-projects and, as a result, may have had difficulties in separating various processes from each other. This participant's solution to eke out time and energy has been to avoid involvement in practical issues, prioritize away detailed memorandums, and focus on the traffic strategy's supporting materials.

But then you need time and get a short week to talk to others in the organization – this is how you make time. We've had too little time to familiarize with the drafts. (project participant)

Ongoing evaluation observations linked to involvement and challenges at individual level were that the participants found it difficult to see the benefits in taking responsibility for and engaging in the traffic strategy work – i.e. operating proactively and not just based on process and project management's requests. Several workgroup members could see the big picture and benefits of the strategy thanks to their previous experiences. However, this was more difficult for new participants who were also initially less engaged in the project.
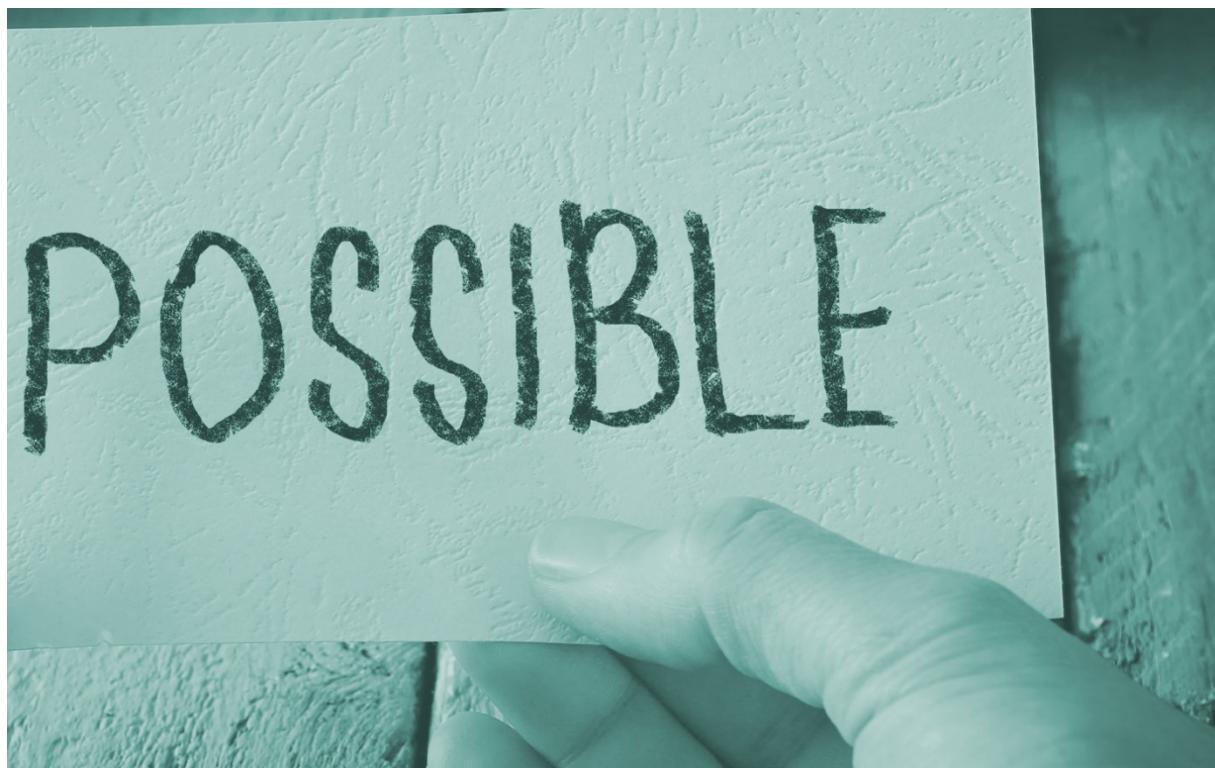
Influence & Opportunities

The following chapter presents factors linked to the traffic strategy's external surroundings that resulted in opportunities during the process and in terms of its implementation.

External – National and Regional Levels

Unanimity, Shared Needs and Political Anchoring

Without national borders, it would have been easy to think of the E12 route as a natural corridor, voiced one steering group member. S/he emphasized the route's importance as one of the most significant areas for regional development, because the Northern Scandinavian transverse region represents close to 2/3 of the industrial production in the Nordic countries. Close cooperation and improved transverse logistics can create considerably larger growth potential than what separate projects within each country can achieve. In terms of population, Ostrobothnia (Finland) and its surrounding areas has circa 400 000 inhabitants, Västerbotten (Sweden) circa 300 000, and Helgeland (Norway) circa 80 000. In other words, the heaviest administrative center for approx. 800 000 inhabitants is located within a radius of 600 kilometers. This was seen as a major opportunity and driving force for the development of a joint traffic strategy, because the cooperating countries and regions all shared the same needs.

The regions of Ostrobothnia and Västerbotten are somewhat similar, whereas Norway has a completely different structure. However, one of the participants remarked that there was large unanimity concerning goals and what the parties wanted to achieve, as well as a feeling of closeness between the regions that are bound together by cooperation over the Kvarken.

The regions – we have a close relationship and good relations ... The Finnish and Swedish sides are bound together by collaboration organized by the Kvarken Council … the driving force of cooperation and the project is

without a doubt found in the three municipalities: Umeå (Sweden), Vaasa (Finland), and Mo i Rana (Norway). (project participant and steering group member)

Several workgroup members stated that cooperation at national and regional levels had generally functioned well. It has also received significant resources from the European Union via Interreg for regional and cross-border infrastructure development, thus enabling the development of and within the E12 route. The Kvarken Council is a cross-border body, appointed by the Nordic Council and funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Together with MidtSkandia, it has the resources to push development further. This can be challenging due to the amount of resources that is needed, although it is essentially an opportunity because there is an economic platform to build upon, as well as similar needs for infrastructure investments amongst the cooperating parties. Cooperation along the E12 route is politically anchored, which manifests in the appointment of cross-border bodies and commissioning organizations, indicating prioritization, conferring mandates and giving substance in a European perspective.

The cross-border organizations – the Kvarken Council, MidtSkandia and Blå Vägen – currently "own" the project, but the participants voiced that it was important for regional associations and other concerned actors to accept the strategy, which should be transparent and well-defined and provide structure. Participation has been seen as crucial because it enables further anchoring.

We gain acceptance for the document if we do it with participation – a feeling of owning this, which is a precondition for submitting the document to political processing in the next step. (project manager)

Collaboration between regional and local levels opened the gates for the inflow of national development funds. However, it was important that the focus and project did not become a significantly local one, because the lack of support from regions could have created opposition at national level. It was also important that the organizations that funded related development were included in the traffic strategy work in order for it to receive actual value.

One project manager remarked that cooperation between the regions is influenced by the continuity in representation and that the several participant reshufflings in Norway has impacted the work. One participant commented that reshuffling had indeed slowed down the work but also provided an opportunity and contributed to the process by bringing new perspectives to enrichen the work.

Ongoing evaluation observations were that the project has embraced unifying aspects beyond national borders, and that the participants have shared and felt strongly about these similarities. They have their own and shared experiences of addressing the same types of challenges within their own countries and, therefore, have been able to identify with each other. In this respect, the external context has increased commitment and involvement as well as strengthened the process.

Internal – Organizational and Individual Levels

Organizational Level

The following chapter details the opportunities that have influenced the process at group and individual levels. Organizational level is about the task and cooperation between actors in a group, whereas individual level is about social relations, the will to influence, and commitment, as well as how these influence the process.

Unanimity, Cooperation and Task

Unanimity at national, regional and local levels concerning the E12 route's significance and needs in terms of infrastructure investments was a starting point that united the participating organizations from the start. This led to a decision to cooperate within the main project and to participate in the development of a joint traffic strategy.

The central actors have understood this, and it's been the motivation to get going. The involved municipalities have had great expectations regarding the work that will be implemented. (project participant and steering group member)

The unanimity that arose during the traffic strategy work has been a motivation for further collaboration. The parties are now discussing the possibility of establishing a company and creating a work package concerning this, which is described as a major step forward by one participant.

Ongoing evaluation observations are that the task – i.e. the project description and the outline that was chosen – created a structure and process that enabled the development of unanimity, concretization of goals, and identification of measures in the traffic strategy via dialogue and negotiations. Moreover, it enabled the development of the route's strategy and focus on continued cooperation.

Opportunities and Will to Influence

Influencing opportunities have been big in the traffic strategy work due to the relatively open structure, participation in the workgroup's continuous work, and access to summaries of previous work, documents, reports, etc.

… "boiling it down to a sort of summary" …… "looking towards 2040 and a joint strategy. That's where the big opportunities lie – getting down on paper what they've done, creating a shared heritage with a clear direction forward. It's not a 'road map', that's something for the next step." (process manager)

Ongoing evaluation observations from the meetings were that the absence of some key actors contributed to the emergence of other and new perspectives, thus enriching the traffic strategy work. The intermediate web meetings also offered an easier opportunity to participate for many who contributed to the creation of continuity in the work process.

Individual Level

Social Relations

Several participants knew each other well and had personal relations from the start as well as good experiences of working together in various projects with similar themes, which created a favourable foundation for unanimity and cooperation.

I'm surprised at such a level of unanimity – they're different but good at finding shared denominators. Consensus has been clear and good, probably because many are acquainted from before ... several have worked together in various projects with similar themes and have shared experiences that they can build on. (process management)

Lunch-to-lunch meetings contributed to the important development of social relations between the participants.

Getting to know each other a little better, which has been very important. (project participant and steering group member)

Ongoing evaluation observations from the meetings were that the social and team-building activities were important for relationship-building, because several participants were new to the workgroup and these activities aided them in the establishment of social relations with other participants. The activities also bridged the "we and them" gap between those who knew each other from before and the newcomers. They created shared and fun experiences and allowed room for interaction at personal level which, in turn, created trust and facilitated subsequent work.

The significance of earlier good experiences of network cooperation and the value of social relations further confirms the findings of previous network research. It takes time to build relations and trust, but it is usually worth it in projects that stretch over long periods of time.

Will to Influence and Commitment

Some participants were active before and during the planning of the main project and viewed the development of logistics solutions as a major growth potential for Northern Scandinavia, something that became a driving force in the work.

This is my driving force – I've witnessed the development potential for several years. We share the same challenges. I think that's the most important thing. If we can make this and the bottlenecks more visible, we've created value. (project participant and steering group member)

The participants' starting point was their own traffic-related work that could benefit from knowledge and contacts with colleagues in other countries, but also generate further development in terms of cooperation.

Our own work is most important for us – for example, when talking about traffic strategy it is obvious that good contacts and knowledge of how others work in other countries enables us to take others into consideration and develop more together. (project manager)

Process management noticed relatively early in the work process – and with astonishment – that several participants had little experience of formulating themselves in writing, although there were even examples of the opposite, i.e. that some were sharper than expected.

I'm a little surprised by this. Because I've read a lot before this and understood that there's been a high level – but I discovered that not all in the workgroup express themselves in this way and are sometimes very clumsy. (process manager)

As previously mentioned, process managers called for texts from the participants for the compilation of the traffic strategy during the first meetings, and when this was unsuccessful, they changed the strategy so that supporting materials were sent to the participants for examination, thus speeding up the process. *One ongoing evaluation observation* from this was that this rendered the strategy less abstract, more concrete, and clearly connected to the participants' own reality, which made the work more important, created energy in the group, and boosted **involvement** during meetings and in discussions.

Project management views that participation in the work process has been good, that the participants have grown in their roles and been involved, and that everything has gone much easier than expected, although there has been a great deal of work and much participant reshuffling. The participants' responsibility for new group members and the sense that the newcomers have adjusted well to the group and taken good care of shows that the group was welcoming and saw an opportunity in this which, in turn, positively influenced the work. In addition, new participants have been clear in their wishes to work with the development of the traffic strategy, hence contributing to the creation of a good atmosphere.

Representation has been good – pretty intensive with many meetings – same people, accomplished individuals, a good discussion climate, people who've grown into their roles and made the discussion climate good. (project manager)

Everything's gone much easier although there's been a lot of work. I couldn't have imagined that there'd be so much participant reshuffling – but the newcomers have adjusted well, which means that the group is good – it's a very welcoming group since it takes care of its new members. And the newcomers have also voiced their wishes clearly, helping to make a good atmosphere. (project manager)

One ongoing evaluation observation is that the closer one's own work situation is to the task, the easier it usually is to create involvement and commitment. Therefore, the way of working with better documentation became successful in this case, because the overarching assignment lay on an abstract level in several respects.

Role of Leadership

Process Management

One process manager was contracted as a coordinator for the whole WP2, which encompassed work with the development of a joint traffic strategy and also a sub-project regarding cross-border infrastructure planning. A process manager's role in the traffic strategy work was perceived to consist of several parts, the most important one involving the boosting of the process itself, but it was also important to make the handpicked participants feel good because they were the ones who would drive the process forward. The role also included information-mediation and helping the participants to find the available knowhow by inviting experts and the like. Process managers needed to have constant control on where the project was in relation to the big picture and to act as culture-bearers in this. One process manager stated that it was important to work in a transparent manner and that process management could be summarized as driving the work forward, making continuous progress,

and crossing the finish line. This meant helping silent participants to get their voices heard, dampening down the ones who talked too much, and maintaining focus on the overarching idea and purpose so as to guarantee correct positioning. The process manager had tried to read situations and lean on those who were considered "safe bets", as well as to guarantee certain quality assurance in order to drive the process forward towards something concrete.

The process managers had somewhat different roles: a more experienced one boosted the process forward, whereas the other acted more like an assistant process manager and "right hand", supporting the work. This included administrative tasks, e.g. sending meeting invitations, structurizing, visualizing and distributing materials. Both process managers had previous experience of traffic and transport issues and felt very strongly about the field. One of the process managers had a political overview that surpassed the project management's one, which was seen as a strength for the project. When these experiences were combined with the other process manager's good structure, their characteristics were complemented. They thought of themselves as a dynamic duo, where one "*talks big and introduces ideas*", while the other "*is more concrete, brief, and focuses on the things that need to be done and answers for their structure*".

According to process management, the development work of the traffic strategy differed from other activities because the steering group had different assignments within the same project by functioning as responsible instances and participants. The process manager found it difficult to *handle* this – not least in relation to the main project manager, who had three different roles, thus making it difficult to determine which role the various statements related to and what the statements actually meant.

I have to live with the fact that he has three different roles, so sometimes I think it's fair that I oppose him – but not always, and it's complicated, so I'm not always sure if I'll manage it. (process manager)

Consultants in process management worked closely together before and after every meeting, and afterwards reconciled with the principal project manager in order to safeguard against any confusion. Direct contact was also made with various persons to guarantee the involvement of experts during the meetings. The strategy towards the workgroup has been to continuously remind how everything is linked in the work process and to repeat this throughout the process so that everyone can understand where they are and to clarify the progress.

Trying to repeat the context so that people understand where they are. Clarifying – that this is what we're going to do today so that there's more than just discussions – because this is a group that likes to discuss. (process manager)

Clarity is a key concept for process management, similar to unanimity between the process and project management as regards the goals of the joint work.

What I want is clarity – that's why we've done back-casting, so that we're unanimous on where to go with this. (project manager)

Project management admits that the schedule has occasionally been tight and that the participants have not had much time to prepare. However, they feel that they have handled the issue well and that everything has been clear. The same applies for all administrative aspects linked to the process, e.g. travels and accommodation, which are also important and have functioned well.

One project manager commented that the biggest challenge linked to process management was to see to it that the participants were able to put down the work that was required. If the participants could not keep up, the managers had to be prepared to deliver to them and give them everything they needed on-the-spot. Project management viewed that the process managers had "*done a good job and provided a foundation for the participants*" and hoped that it stemmed from their good dialogue. The management's own contribution came down to meeting and agreeing with the process managers on a

schedule, the group's composition, outline, and what kind of support was needed to implement the work process. Dialogue and visioning have worked well. The project needed a vision, and the suggestions that were received in Vaasa, Finland, impressed the process manager. Even if the final outcome was different, the impression was that the participants felt that they had contributed to the vision's formation and had their say.

Ongoing evaluation observations in connection to the meetings were that one process manager had a unique skill and overview of how traffic and logistics have been planned and worked with at international, national and regional levels, in addition to extensive knowledge of the different key actors, which contributed to the progression of the work process. He often provided insightful comments, although his role as an expert made him more of an interlocutor than discussion leader in the dialogue. His insightful, long introductions and input, which were often necessary, also took energy from the group that could become silent, perhaps due to a feeling of insufficient knowledge compared to him. Moreover, the process manager occasionally exhibited some frustration and impatience when it came to those that were not as initiated.

A process manager's role is to push a process forward on the basis of his/her given preconditions. It is about 'setting the stage', facilitating, which means assisting interaction and relationship-building between the participants, offering support, preparing supporting materials, and instilling energy into the group when necessary. A process manager must have 'big ears and a small mouth', listen to the dialogue and participants, and be responsive to changes and where the involvement and commitment lie, so that they can be supported because they are the "motor" in cooperation between organizations – and process management has no authority in this. It is about constantly ensuring that everyone gets their say and feels included and valuable, and knowing when it is time to intervene and steer, as well as to back up so that the participants themselves can take responsibility of propelling the process forward. A process manager needs to 'play it cool' and trust the process, so that s/he can convey it to the participants in a convincing manner. Process management has "rallied" in a commendable way. They have worked hard to include, involve and drive the process forward – but perhaps also instilled too much energy and assumed responsibility from the participants on some occasions. This is a very difficult balancing act to achieve in a project pressured by such time constraints.

Project Management

The principal project manager saw it as his role to implement the project plan produced by the steering group and to introduce changes during the work, if necessary. In such cases, suggestions for changes were conveyed to the steering group for review. The main project has undergone several changes, although not many of them have been linked to the traffic strategy.

According to the same project manager, project management is about "*maintaining balance by not steering but also by not giving creativity too many knocks*", because "*it doesn't work without creativity and participation*". The high number of participant reshufflings forced the project manager to become more involved in this sub-project than initially planned in order to keep the schedule. The significance of keeping the schedule is emphasized. Project and process management have worked together to achieve this. Social characteristics are also seen as an important part of project management.

It's also about being a fun uncle – but it's easy – we've got good people and it's fun to meet up. (project manager)

The project manager comments that people handle challenges linked to project management in different ways and that it is important to find a level that works and agree on certain things, but one must also be realistic and stand by one's opinions. A traffic strategy kan always be revised, so there is

no cause for concern. The project itself was large and had major procurements, but the project manager deems that he has found the right persons to work with. He chose to set goals for the activities and focused on making these goals understood by all.

... the right people, and we've been lucky and found the right consultants. You get nothing done if you start to worry. It's about setting goals for the work and making people understand them. (project manager)

The project managers had different roles. One had been active since the start in the writing process and was seen to have created the project. This manager was also the principal project manager and, therefore, possessed a better overall picture of what was in mind since the beginning. He also took care of administration between the project and Botnia Atlantica. The other joined the project later and considered himself more of a secretary tasked with writing up the project, reporting, and compiling data, e.g. economic reports. He viewed that the assignment varied between reporting, reading, trying to steer something in the right direction, and participating in groupwork. He voiced that he was not aware of all that happened in the other participating countries and, consequently, did not possess such a large overall picture. In addition, there was a third participant in the workgroup who was also a steering group member, which was the role that he felt most connected to. He had taken part in project planning and felt large responsibility for and interest in the project's outcome, seeing as there were decisions in his regional council to prioritize work in WP2 and WP3 and, in this, contribute with pushing forward. The project participant/steering group member thus gained an informal role as project manager in the traffic strategy work, since the formally appointed project manager was new to the role. Since the Umeå/Vaasa cooperation constellation was judged to carry the most weight, also by contributing with a large part of the funding, he chose to heavily commit himself to the work on behalf of the Norwegian contingent by contributing with knowledge to the principal project manager regarding his own region and its economic life.

The purpose of project management and its role in strategic cooperation processes is to secure that the cooperation's purpose, goals, implementation and results are achieved in accordance with the schedule and budget. It is about administration, follow-up and feedback, as well as giving support to process management. *Ongoing evaluation observations* from the meetings were that project management handled their administrative tasks in a professional manner. A project manager must also 'play it cool' and be able to adjust the assignment if the participants' involvement and needs do not correspond to what was stated in the project application. This was judged to work well in WP2.

Steering

Approach and Methodology

In the beginning of the project, there were documents that described the project and its outline based on experiences from previous projects, e.g. SARETS, and on research designs in TRAST and PolySUMP. These documents suggested that one person from Trafikverket with experience in SARETS should act as the principal process manager, whereas the contracted consultant (coordinator) should assist him/her in his/her duties. However, this outline did not work; there were no such contracts and the person in question did not have the time. However, the role of a sounding board remained because the traffic strategy's process manager had not previously worked with the TRAST methodology (i.e. public transportation in municipalities based on a Future Search process).

The process manager commented that the first meetings with the reference person from Trafikverket were tricky because they had such different ideas before managing to agree on the content at a kick-off conference that took place Lycksele, Sweden, on 26 April 2017.

The meetings were very difficult at first before we managed to come up with the contents at the kick-off conference. He had an idea – I had others, but we managed to meet in the middle with something that seemed to work well. (process manager)

Contact had been made between the meetings to involve the previously intended process manager, but he only attended the first meeting in Sandnessjøen, Norway. The process managers have utilized the methodology from TRAST in the traffic strategy work as a baseline for dividing the transport area into different parts, although they have otherwise used a mixture of various ways of propelling the project forward, which has worked well. The starting point was that the work would be run in a co-creating process, meaning that everyone would be active and anchor themselves at the home front in their own organizations. However, the process manager is not aware to what extent this has been done, since it is difficult to control. According to him, an important part of steering is to read the temperature of different individuals and groups during the meetings, where they are, what have they learnt, etc.

Possessing a clear picture of the current situation makes it possible to plan further, and delivering on time has been important for the principal project manager. One part of the principal project manager's steering focused on constant reconnection to the purpose, without going down to a detailed level.

I want to have a picture of where I am so that I can map out the way whatever the deliverables are, so that it gets finished. My way of leading was to reconnect to the purpose, without going down to a detailed level. (project manager)

The project manager commented that an important part of steering was to carry out meaningful activities and involve the participants so that they felt that they had an opportunity to co-create. This required careful planning and consolidation between the project and process management for it to succeed. It was also about basing the work on expected results, because the project manager wanted to understand where he had to be so that he could pave the way forward and be able to deliver on time.

I want to have a clear picture of where I'm going to be in a few months so that I can prepare – some kind of a crude road forward so that we can deliver on time – that's what's important. (project manager)

The objective was clear from the start, even though the project lived its own life. The importance of having milestones was emphasized by the project manager, who viewed that timetabling was essential in producing a joint traffic strategy. He comments that it has been important to reconnect to the purpose, maintain the objective of a finished joint strategy in February, work tight, and steer without disrupting creativity. The latter was deemed as the most interesting, although it signified difficult balancing. Joining the project at a late stage as a project manager responsible for steering while "in full swing" was a challenging assignment, seeing as there was much to familiarize oneself with, many persons to relate to, and several things that were already going on. It was also difficult to have time to understand, to know what everything meant and what needed to happen so that the goals would lead to a joint traffic strategy.

It was all so vast. All ongoing cases, measurements and the like – to know what they meant, what we were supposed to get out of it. When you do something like that with so many people – the question of where we want to go with this and what we want to achieve, because everything we do and all of our goals must be such that we go towards results. (project manager)

Other challenges connected to steering were role conflicts with subsequent tensions in a meeting situation where one project manager dealt out micromanaging comments. These caused frustration in one process manager who felt that his/her process management task became difficult. The same project manager's will to support and acknowledge the participants' input and involvement has – in times when it became contradictory – created some confusion, although it has generally been

important to the project's advancement. However, it is important to differentiate between the process and project management's roles and tasks so that everyone has a clear picture of who does what.

One ongoing evaluation observation was that the lack of time sometimes pressured the process managers to speed up the process at the expense of not allowing everyone to have their say. The participants were not always given time to reflect on questions, and not everyone had an opportunity to express their views during "check-in" and "check-out", despite reminders from the project evaluator of the importance of listening to everyone's opinions. Another observation linked to steering was the process management's occasional slowness at the early stages of work, when results sprawled since they had to be constantly analyzed and clustered in real time so that the participants could immediately see what they had contributed to. Instead, this was done between meetings. The participants felt that this advanced slowly, especially during web meetings linked to "polishing", e.g. in terms of goals and measures. This slowness was not always time-efficient but, at the same time, it was needed during the final stage to force participants to take responsibility and act proactively, which increased the sense of ownership of the joint strategy.

The process managers' steering measures were occasionally followed by a clear drive, and they were cathartic in situations where the participants could not grasp the larger picture and needed clarity to continue with the work. This happened e.g. when drafting supporting materials to relate to with concrete goals and measures. However, in some contexts this drive took away responsibility from the participants and hindered proactiveness and involvement, something that was evidenced by the tightly steered outline during meetings. At the same time, it was necessary to steer, and the balancing act of choosing when to steer and when to back up, as well as choosing the right time and place for steering, was difficult.

One process manager's ability to visualize with pictures was a considerable and clarifying support throughout the process. It created structure and steered the work in a more indirect manner.

It is worth noting that the choice of persons is often connected to the choice of methodology. Therefore, the composition of individuals in project and process management roles becomes highly significant due to various reasons. Differences in experiences, approaches and ways of working can complement and strengthen the bigger picture, but they can also cause conflicts.

Structure

The process manager does not think that *things have been easier than planned* in the traffic strategy work; instead, everything has flowed quite well. Careful planning at the start of the project, partly based on "back-casting" and the need to be finished by February 2018, yielded results. The SARETS model was used as a starting point in the planning work, although project and process management quickly realized that it would not work with so many short meetings and decided that the only appropriate model was to organize lunch-to-lunch meetings. Another starting point for steering was the question of how many lunch-to-lunch meetings and web meetings should be organized. One extra web meeting was arranged at the end of the project to conclude it. Project and process management adapted the meeting structure to the group's progression with the work and to the time constraints that many of the participants mentioned. Technology played a major part in the web meetings – it had to work. The timespan was difficult to balance, because it was important that the participants had enough energy for both the morning and afternoon sessions. This was solved with a long lunch break. Nonetheless, the web meetings were experienced as long and the participants' tempo as relatively low, despite the process manager's efforts to maintain the energy. The participants remarked that it could be difficult to be creative during the web meetings with people that they did not know, but that interaction and established contacts could facilitate this. It is worth noting that the purpose of web meetings was for the participants to be efficient, not creative.

Web meetings where you have to be creative with strangers are pointless. On the other hand, when you have established good interaction, you can proceed with more efficient forms of cooperation, web meetings. (project participant)

The process manager states that he missed an opportunity early in the project of creating a sufficiently strict agenda that prevented the participants from 'digressing'. He also states that working alone from home during the web meetings can sometimes have been an advantage, instead of meeting with the whole project management in a meeting inside a meeting. He sat with the others during the first meeting in order to create security, but he felt that it led to frivolity and disorderliness. It was easier to be tough when he sat alone. Experiences from the workgroup were that it worked better to be somewhat tough, to have and maintain a strict agenda, and to direct the participants and drive the process forward, seeing as nobody wanted to sit too long at meetings. An important part in steering has been to allow everyone an opportunity to express their opinions and comment constructively. It has been a challenge, likewise to obtaining something concrete from the participants, e.g. in the form of the formulation of goals so as to advance the work. It was also experienced easier to "*press on*" later in the work process, seeing as it was a process in itself to get the participants to find each other. When they did so and began to feel comfortable with each other, it was also easier to produce concrete results and work together. This was something that was given room to grow.

... it's a challenge to 'milk' the group, for instance concerning the goals – we can't be fluffy the whole time, we have to get down to concrete issues – have to believe in it, otherwise there won't be anything in the report, so we have to whip the group a bit. The biggest challenge was to get the group to concretize so that we could move forward with the work – for example nail goals, a concrete vision in the sense and the like. It sounds as if it wouldn't have been that difficult – but it actually has been. (process manager)

One ongoing evaluation observation was that the writing process could have progressed faster and been more proactive if groups would have been assigned for the different areas of the strategy, tasked with producing materials for the workgroup to familiarize themselves with. In this way, internal control between group members could have additionally driven the process forward ahead of the shared homework.

One participant commented that an important part of the steering of such processes came down to getting everyone to take responsibility for their involvement, which was experienced as a general concern that is often connected to personality. It is possible to come to the "*smartest decisions*" if everyone takes part, meaning that it was a question of directing the work in the best way to achieve this. Another participant highlighted the need for generosity in situations that enable open dialogue and creativity, and that not everything needs to be ready-made in advance.

That not everything needs to be mapped out, it should be OK to test ideas – OK to push at open doors. If you're junior – take what has been previously tested and have a positive attitude towards the grouping – including the slightly silly question and idea – that it's allowed to be that way in a process and that you move forward without backing down. (project participant)

The same project manager noted that an important part of steering and for group dynamic was creating preconditions for the establishment of personal relations, security and trust between the participants and, simultaneously, clearly signaling that everyone has equal value. *One ongoing evaluation observation* from the meetings was that process management was continuously careful to point out that the participants were there as experts and knew the most, which lended them legitimacy to act. This also meant that nobody had to act as a comedian to get to express their opinions; instead, everyone was given a real opportunity to participate in the work and influence it.

It's important to create personal relations so that you know who you're dealing with and don't have to act as a comedian. (project participant)

It was also important to reduce friction between the participants and to persuade everyone to pull together in order to get the "*train rolling*", because then the "*slow, heavy engine can start moving*" (*project participant*).

Project and process management reconnected continuously to political reference group members who, in turn, had detailed viewpoints on the changes in focus and ways of working. These viewpoints were taken into consideration, and the reference group thus contributed to valuable political anchoring.

Ongoing evaluation observations from the meetings were that there were occasionally disagreements between the principal project manager and process manager in terms of how and in what way the process should be pushed forward. This also became evident for the participants. While the process manager encouraged everyone to think out loud and freely in many respects, the project manager constantly returned to the time aspect and purpose in order to limit the process and drive it forward. It was not always easy to predict which inputs would be given room and what would be limited, which was a source of frustration for process management. This occasionally created tension in the workgroup, although it was not necessarily seen as a problem and thus left as it was. There was obviously a permissive atmosphere with a high ceiling, and the members had come a long way as a group.

The balance between steering hard and allowing room for creativity and reflection is difficult, which is even showcased in this project. People are different, and this often makes conflicts impossible to avoid. Conflicts put group cohesion to the test, and social relations and previous experiences of network cooperation can help the participants to have forbearance with each other and with the prevailing differences of opinion.

Results

Traffic Strategy

The process managers were tasked with compiling the work that had been going on for circa six months into a cross-border traffic strategy. Participants in the traffic strategy work have contributed to the formulation of this through the work that has been carried out during and between workshops, **in connection to** web meetings and homework, strongly encouraged by the process managers. Ramboll's system analysis has functioned as a knowledge-based foundation in the work, likewise to steering documents, community planning, and national, regional and local traffic-related strategies. The strategy's formulation and writing work gained momentum during the later meetings, when everything became more concrete and the decision points came closer to the participants' own organizations and areas of interest. The traffic strategy was presented in its final form at a final conference in Vaasa, Finland, on 15 March 2018.
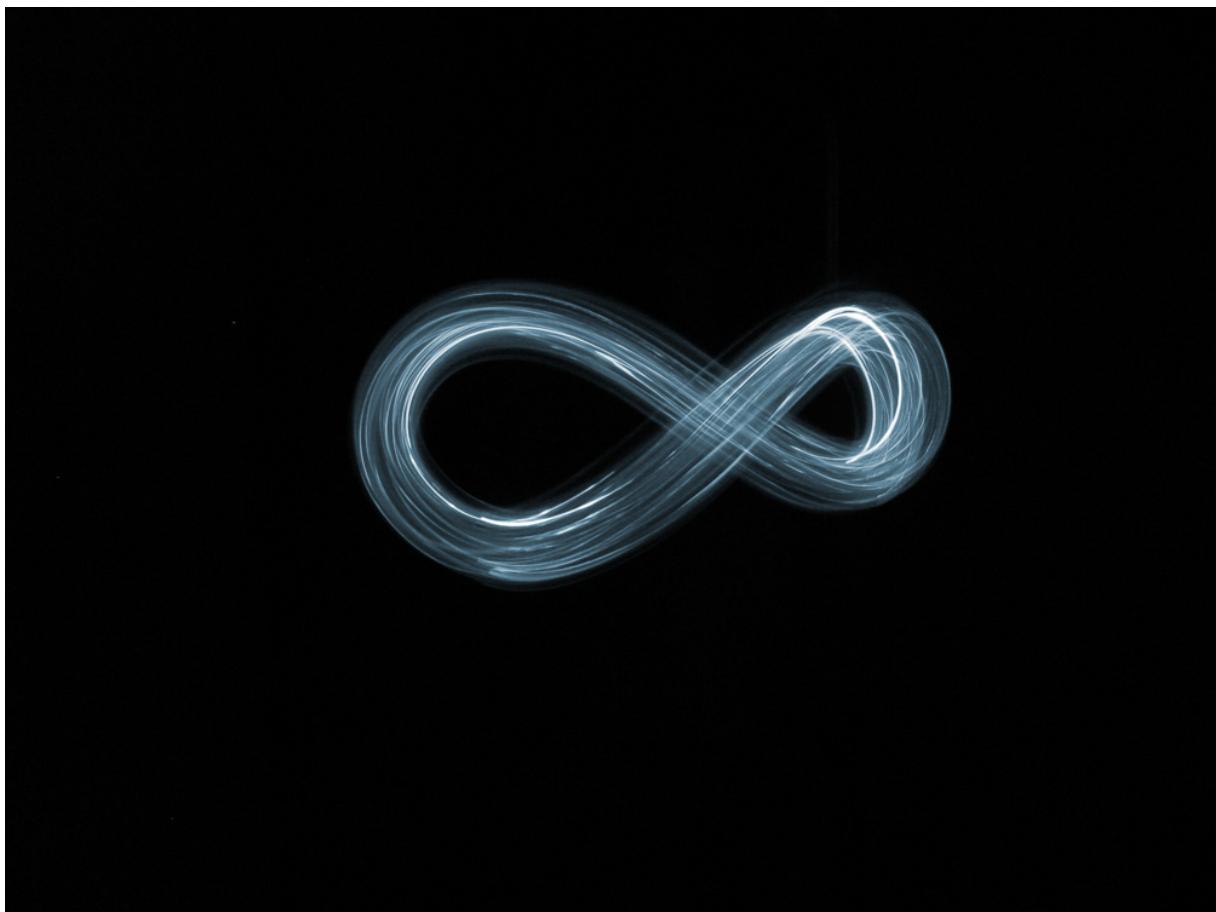
Learning

Learning About Regions

The social community within the given demography has contributed to greater learning of the various regions. One lesson is that the cooperating regions are eager to think that they are alike in various areas, but that the discussions and decision-making processes differ in the different countries. Because Sweden led the project, there were numerous discussions on several occasions. According to a participant, Finland would have given more orders, whereas in Norway fewer people would have

been allowed to participate in the discussions, which would also have been less extensive. The participant also pointed out that it is important to understand and accept similarities and differences.

When I came to Sweden, everyone was given room to participate, whereas when I came to the first meeting with the Kvarken Council in Finland, the protocol was already determined. In Sweden, the first question is always "is there anything that we have missed" ... (project participant)

Another participant had realized how easy it was to become blind to flaws at home.

Learning About Subject Matters

The principal project manager states that there could have been more discussions about the traffic strategy and what it is initially about, thus creating unanimity around this. He means that both project and process management have taken too much for granted.

One project manager had received new insight regarding the breadth and possible social influences arising from infrastructure changes. One example was that a small town wanted a good road to a larger city, but that it necessarily did not have to be good because the labour force could also relocate, thus producing an opposite result. Another project manager had received increased insight on the severity of EU rules.

A steering group member was surprised by how national traffic organizations view transverse traffic and consider its potential.

One participant highlights learning connected to the understanding of available transport preconditions for freight and passenger transports along the E12 route, and the need for developing competence regarding how shippers and sellers think and what their value chains look like. Another participant comments that the participants had learned much about everyone's logistic systems, planning boards etc., which resulted in e.g. invitations from other countries' traffic administrations to participate in measure analysis work. Project cooperation has even increased knowledge about companies, branches and management for the cooperating municipalities, which also facilitates the discussion and interpretation of signals.

Ongoing evaluation observations are that there is an overall shared understanding for the subject matter, which lays a good foundation for further collaboration, something that is also pointed out by one steering group member.

Personal Learning

The principal project manager's assessment is that the group has developed social, personal and communicative preconditions. The project has granted new perspectives and room for reflections around the balance linked to project management, which he thinks that he has become better at. The social community within the given demography has also contributed to increased knowledge on what is needed for people to feel good and be seen. The other project manager also learned things that were unknown to him before.

One process manager comments that he has learned more about the E12 route/corridor. The most important lesson that can also be applied in the future is linked to documentation and having someone who takes notes of everything. The process manager has not worked in this manner before and is unaware of how much of what was written down was read by the participants. All that matters is that the documentation is available, making it possible to go back and reconnect. He has also, with some surprise, learned that people in general have difficulties in expressing themselves in writing; he had expected to receive much more written supporting materials. The lesson for future projects is to work in a more "*semi-finished*" way, i.e. by preparing supporting materials that everyone can

familiarize themselves with. Such requires careful planning and the writing of finished texts, which can be seen as "*half-manipulative*" and, therefore, requires that process management "*plays with their cards face up and with transparency*". The strength with such an outline is to have detailed documentation to fall back on if something is questioned.

The other process manager saw clear lessons in letting things grow at their own pace and in the insight that things never go as planned in such work processes. In such cases, it is important to adapt to achieve good results, and it is impossible to have a fixed outline because it must be continuously adjusted. The process manager also found lessons linked to the timeframe – i.e. more time and opportunities to extend the work process. The timeframe and the fact that everything takes longer than planned is also a lesson highlighted by the participants.

Many participants were happy with the breadth in terms of the participants, organizations and competence areas, and thought that it was a good way to work. A lesson connected to the outline was that it could take a while for newcomers to understand what happened, where they were headed, etc.

Ongoing evaluation observations from the meetings were that many participants had difficulties in differentiating between what happened in the various sub-projects in E12 Atlantica Transport, because they were involved in several of the processes. The lesson from this is to discuss and clarify the various roles both from the start and continuously during the discussions in order to increase focus on the work and to clearly illustrate what is what. Another lesson is that the development of a joint traffic strategy may need a cooperation model or methodology. Such a model needs to be perceived as realistic and feasible in order to be used as an inspiration, a reflection tool and/or a checklist. Questions about traffic strategy work were answered with experiences from other sub-projects all the way to the end of the project, also by those who had partaken in the writing of the main project. This is noteworthy but also understandable, because the issues were closely related and there was actually no continuous dialogue around the similarities and differences, or lessons from one to the other.

Another observation was that the supporting materials created a necessary starting point for the participants. The materials stimulated reflections and increased involvement and contributions to the traffic strategy. Continuous visualization with models and pictures also offered considerable support and structure that created preconditions for progression. In hindsight, the process manager could have devoted more time to the description of results, table of contents, and the report's structure draft in order to create clarity from the start in terms of the assignment, bigger picture and its parts. However, the other process manager remarks that a more open outline from the start would have been better based on the lesson that the outline had to be continuously adapted. The knowledge that this is a precondition and that managers need to "*play it cool*" would have been good to know from the beginning, the process manager states.

One participant pointed out an especially important lesson as regards the practical parts, their importance, and how well they have worked with them.

… does a really good job, and instead of undervaluing we should highlight the fact that the basic stuff, in addition to having everything in order, is important. (project participant)

The same participant emphasized that it is possible to learn from the outline at workshops organized e.g. in other sub-projects, seeing as the quality of the workshops is immensely important. He was critical about the workshop in Vaasa, Finland, and felt that it was confusing because of the inclusion of the equality perspective, which took too much time. He was also critical about everyone sitting down to group discussions and quickly coming up with something, when the person taking notes discussed the results without anyone actually having reached consensus. According to the same participant, the lessons connected to this have to do with the meeting outline and also about discussing the reasonableness of the proposed outline with the participants ahead of every meeting, likewise to the

rules for the presentation of results. The first workshop (in Sandnessjøen, Norway) was experienced as different and constructive by the participant, since it resulted in an evening discussion and a state of "flow".

The one that was really good and had no flaws … the first led to the group sitting together in the evening, drinking pilsner and being creative about the topic … we reached a state of flow, which continued on the following day. (project participant)

Another participant stated that the economic life and national transport administrations should have been more involved, albeit without needing to attend every meeting. The lesson from this is that the process could have been reconnected to selected persons between each meeting, so that the work could have been guaranteed in the whole region. The participant further commented that this was the single most important thing that could have been done differently.

When asked *what has surprised you the most in the process*, the principal project manager mentions the difficulty of observing different levels, which was perceived as individual. He also called for a cooperation structure and felt that the narrative of the process should have been developed on the basis of a shared message, which is also a lesson to be learned.

The process manager was surprised over how difficult it was for the participants to summarize and remember what had happened between meetings. The lesson from this is to support recollection and continuity when there are long intervals between meetings.

As a consultant I'm used to putting incoherent things into words and think that everyone is like me … I'm surprised that this is difficult for many and that people need support in this – even if it's not that strange. (process manager)

Networks and Relations

Another result that arose from the work with the joint traffic strategy was that the participants have developed social relations and trust and also gained positive experiences of working with complex, cross-border cooperation processes that they can bring into further work with the strategy's anchoring and implementation.

Next Step

Implementation, Anchoring at National and European Levels

Reflections concerning the next step emerged in group dialogues during an analysis workshop in Lycksele, Sweden, on 13 February 2018. One group took note of cultural differences in terms of traditions and ways of working. Differences that became evident during the project were that Sweden was more consensus-seeking than Norway and Finland, and that it is important in the future to clarify cultural differences as well as roles and responsibilities, take into consideration relations, and inventorize the participants' own preconditions linked to participation in such work processes. The group also concluded that a continuous process, e.g. in the form of an open discussion forum about the cooperation process, would be good. Timetabling, timekeeping and rules for reporting were deemed central. Anchoring to one's own organizations and regions is important in case the timetable does not hold.

The other group remarked that it was important to choose the target of anchoring – in Vännäs, Sweden, it was e.g. best to turn to the municipal commissioner before anchoring with the municipal executive board. This group suggested that the next step was to produce an action plan and emphasized the importance of a political basis ahead of this, which requires a review since the implementation cannot be carried out without support from the region. They also highlighted the importance of differentiating between the project and its results and suggested how this can be taken further and anchored at national and European levels, since this is the commissioning organizations' task. The anchoring process was deemed particularly important also for the commissioners.

It's up to the three commissioners to take this further, which is what happens in commissioned projects. We rally and plan for implementation, act as trailblazers. (project participant)

Another group pointed out a need to identify certain key companies within the E12 route in the next step, and that these companies do not solely have to consist of large businesses; instead, it is vital to choose companies that are prepared to commit to the project.

One project manager commented that the most important thing was to mediate the results to concerned officials and politicians, so that the traffic strategy can act as an instrument. The project manager thinks that this cannot happen if anchoring fails. One participant would like to see a comprehensive unit assume responsibility for future work. The main project has three cooperating organizations that partly overlap each other, and it is important to identify individual themes that are important for all three and that can function as a joint basis for all and be used as a foundation for organizing. Approval from participating municipalities and regions is required to continue with the shared work. The traffic strategy will function as a crucial example of why this cooperation is sensible to establish.

During the final conference in Vaasa, Finland, on 15 March 2018, the Kvarken Council's Director Mr Mathias Lindström took responsibility for the next step in anchoring and implementation, which will concentrate on establishing an EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation) for the E12 region.

COLLABORATIVE MODEL 2 RESULTS

LEADERSHIP

Process management's role and characteristics
- Facilitate, drive, support, prepare, communicate

Project management's role and characteristics
- Administrate, follow-up, report, support, maintain contact with financiers

STEERING
- Structure
- Approach

STRUCTURAL FACTORS
Participants
- Composition
- Representation and roles

Resources
- Financial capital (EU/Interreg)
- Human capital (characteristics, competencies, abilities)
- Social Capital (relations, experiences, legitimacy)

PROCESS
Activities
- Meeting layout and forms of meetings
- Communication
- Documentation

Frequency
- Tempo

Commitment

RESULTS
Task/goals
- Traffic strategy

Learning
- About the region
- About the subject matter
- Personal learning

Networks
- Relations and trust

NEXT STEP
Implementation
- Submitting the work

Anchoring
- Internal/external

INFLUENCE/CHALLENGES

External- National and regional levels
- Regional and local organizing (regulations)
- Key actors
- Anchoring

Internal- Organizational level
- Organizing

Internal- Individual level
- Cooperation
- Responsibility
- Commitment

INFLUENCE/OPPORTUNITIES

Internal- Organizational level
- Unanimity and cooperation
- Task/goals

Internal- Individual level
- Social relations
- Will to influence
- Commitment

External- National and regional levels
- Unanimity
- Shared needs
- Anchoring

Conclusions

Overall, this review presents a variety of factors that should be taken into consideration in this form of network cooperation (see Model 2).

Structural Factors

Composition of Participants

It is important that both the participants as well as project and process management continuously reflect over the actors that need to be included in the process – in the form of participants or in some other way. It is also essential to clarify the distribution of roles when project and process managers and perhaps even steering group representatives take part in the process. Moreover, it is consequential to take into account and respect the proposed distribution of work in a project with several leadership roles, and to create transparency around this.

Representation and Roles

Participants can have several simultaneous roles in large projects, which can result in role conflicts and make it difficult to differentiate between the roles they act upon. It is also difficult for a recipient to understand which role the concerned party acts upon, thus creating vagueness and uncertainty and, as a result, obstructing openness in dialogue. At the same time, an individual's possession of several roles grants them a greater overview and a deeper understanding for the process which, in turn, increases contribution opportunities. It is essential to clarify which roles a participant has in a cooperation process and carry out a continuous dialogue based on this in order to create transparency and prevent role conflicts.

Resources

Financial Capital

External financial resources make it possible to coordinate and implement complex cooperation projects centered around tasks that an individual organization cannot alone take responsibility for. At the same time, however, they limit the room for maneuver both in terms of time and space, e.g. regarding the choice of the number of meetings and their implementation. Nevertheless, it is important not to focus only on expenses but also on the differences between the various forms of meetings.

Human Capital

Heterogeneity in terms of characteristics, competencies and abilities is often a strength, because it brings with it a rich and varied foundation for idea generation, but if the differences become too big, reconciliation with others may become difficult. The latter places considerable demands on process management's communicative abilities.

Social Capital

Collaboration is easier when group members already have social relations and positive experiences from previously working together. Such relations can therefore act as a basis for the construction of a network. However, it is vital to ensure that a community does not become exclusive so that others feel welcome in the group. Shared social activities can be seen to steal time from 'real' work, but they are worth it in the long run if the social relations that such activities stimulate can facilitate teamwork in the future. Consequently, these kinds of activities can be especially beneficial during a project's initial stages.

Process

Activities

Different forms of meetings are associated with different advantages and disadvantages in terms of travel times, opportunities for informal socializing, timespans, expenses, etc. Therefore, it is important to be open to variations and continuously review the original plans. This also includes the participants' possibility to constantly influence the types of inputs that are to occur during the meetings on the basis of existing needs. The selection of social activites should be based on the process management's assessment of the group and the type of interaction that is needed to create and strengthen the development of trust between the participants at various stages.

Communication takes place in different ways. Written documentation in particular has proven to be of immense value, since it offers the participants something to take a stance on. Ideally, the participants would proactively produce their own text materials and preferably in smaller sub-groups, where internal control could speed up the writing process. If this is not the case, supporting materials from process managers can be a way of clarifying and hastening the process.

Frequency

Continuity is important, and a fast tempo reduces the risk of forgetting important aspects, but the tempo must not become so fast that the participants feel that they cannot live up to the expectations that are set – both in the project and concerning other work assignments.

Commitment

Long-term cooperation goals can be perceived as difficult to achieve, which is why commitment is increased by reaching sub-goals linked to actual activities within a shorter timeframe. It is worth noting that commitment and involvement are also created at personal level, not least through experiences of learning and new perspectives which, in turn, can contribute to increased commitment in the shared task.

Participant reshuffling in groups always causes some disturbance and can reduce involvement. New participants can offer important contributions, but it always takes some time before they get up to speed with the work. As a result, it is important that the participating organizations think long-term when choosing their representatives, so that unnecessary representative reshuffling can be avoided. In order to reduce person-dependency, several colleagues in a small organization can share the role of a representative and be responsible for updating each other of the ongoing work.

Leadership

Process Management: Role and Characteristics

A process manager's role is to facilitate interaction and relationship-building between participants, organize the work, prepare supporting materials, and instill energy into the group when necessary. It is about constantly ensuring that everyone gets their say and feels included, and knowing when it is time to intervene and steer as well as to back up so that the participants themselves can take responsibility of propelling the process forward. A process manager needs to 'play it cool' and trust the process, so that s/he can convey it to the participants in a convincing manner.

Project Management: Role and Characteristics

A project manager's role is to ensure that the cooperation's purpose, goals, implementation and results are achieved in accordance with the schedule and budget. It is also about administration, follow-up and feedback, as well as giving support to process management with their tasks.

Steering

The choice of persons for leadership roles is often connected to the choice of methodology. Therefore, the composition of individuals in project and process management roles becomes highly significant due to various reasons. Differences in experiences, approaches and ways of working can complement and strengthen the bigger picture, but they can also cause conflicts.

In contrast to company directors, process managers are not intended to have mandates to steer or to practice decision-making over the process. As a result, their approach comes down to coaching. Nevertheless, there is a possibility to steer e.g. by setting the agenda, directing the dialogue, and via written documentation. This can be needed to give the process structure and drive – but it is important that the initiative does not solely end up with process and project management.

Results

An important side effect of network cooperation is that it creates new networks in itself and also generates knowledge of this type of cooperation which, in both cases, can be highly significant for the future – both in terms of organizations and individuals. Consequently, there is a learning process that can also have many different dimensions and e.g. encompass working methods, subject knowledge, and insight into new perspectives on various issues.

Next Step

A challenge with this way of working often comes down to anchoring to the participants' own organizations, which is needed to pave the way for the next step and the final implementation of the obtained results, seeing as this becomes largely dependent on the selected representatives' work and legitimacy. This reconnects to the choice of participants, because anchoring is easier if these participants are senior members of their respective organizations, with mandates to make decisions. Anchoring can also be required externally, outside the network in question, which furthermore emphasizes the importance of continuously taking this aspect into account throughout the work.

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