2nd edition

A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships

11 Principles

Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships
with Developing Countries (KFPE)

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Swiss Academy of Sciences
Akademie der Naturwissenschaften
Accademia di scienze naturali
Académie des sciences naturelles

The Guide

11 Principles

7 Questions

This Guide is intended for:
Researchers considering or planning to engage in fair and equal partnership towards common goals;

Partnership arrangements striving for innovative research and a fruitful learning culture, both based on mutual trust and responsibility;

Funding agencies designing programmes for effective and intercultural research collaboration;

Policymakers aiming at establishing an enabling environment for effective research collaborations;

Development organisations encouraging contextualisation of scientific knowledge through facilitation and brokering;

International organisations dealing with knowledge-based solutions to global challenges.

Transboundary and intercultural research in partnership is a continuous process of sound knowledge generation, building mutual trust, mutual learning and shared ownership.

The KFPE's 11 principles underscore this process. However, there are many types of research in partnership; these have different requirements in terms of interaction, communication, and mutuality. This is particularly the case when cooperation takes place between poor and rich countries. In other words, the principles may have to be applied selectively depending on the partnership.

The 7 fundamental questions on transboundary research partnerships point to factors that hinder or enable partnerships in different contexts; they are designed to help readers better understand the nature and type of a given partnership.

In addition, the 7 key questions are meant to trigger a debate on how to organise transboundary research collaboration in an effective manner, and on how best to translate scientific knowledge into benefits for society.

Towards equitable and effective collaboration!

P1 Set the agenda together

Issues

Cooperation between researchers or research institutions can take a broad range of forms, from loose exchange of information to contract research and even long-term research collaboration [**Q3**]. Practical experience with North-South collaborations has shown that the more ambitious the goal and the closer the form of cooperation, the more important it is for all parties involved to reach mutual agreement on the meaning and the purpose of their work [**Q1**] [**Q2**]. Joint conduct of research that is relevant and of high scientific quality is only possible if all parties work together towards a shared goal from the very beginning – including the relevant stakeholders [**P2**]. While this seems obvious enough, it is not easy to implement in practice. Cases are rare where collaboration involves two research groups that contribute equally to funding, have equal scientific capacity, and share the same interests. Asymmetry is inevitable and a fact, but its negative impact can be reduced. Determining research questions, research approaches, and research methods jointly is a first important step towards more equity in cooperation, shared ownership and mutual trust.

Main challenges

To reach an understanding that the agenda-setting process requires all initial phases of identification, appraisal and planning to be tackled jointly.

To handle funding schemes and externally imposed obligations so as to guarantee freedom of research and open the partners' scope for participatory procedures.

To counterbalance «inherent inequalities» among partners in order to gradually build mutual ownership and accountability based on trust and motivation.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify

- Check partners' interests and reference systems;
- Appraise external conditions such as research policy, rights of expression;
- Assess potential driving forces regarding risk (disabling drivers) and opportunities (enabling drivers) [**Q2**].

Examine closely and search for options

- Design the planning of «who will do what and how» in a participatory way;
- Put joint formulation of the research questions at the center;
- Define mutually expected outcomes;
- List what requirements need to be fulfilled by partnership to achieve these results.

Stipulate rules and procedures

- Jointly determine the varying levels of partners' involvement in all phases of the project cycle.

Joint undertakings stand a better chance when they benefit both sides. *Euripides*

P2 Interact with stakeholders

Issues

Interaction with potential users of research findings outside the academic world does not, as a rule, begin only once research results are published. Ideally, researchers should involve important stakeholders [**Q5**] early on, in the formulation of research questions or even in certain research activities. The more specific the research is in terms of addressing political and societal issues and users' needs, the more relevant [**Q6**] – and likely to be used [**P10**] – the research results will be. However, interaction with stakeholder groups is a time-intensive and challenging task, and must therefore be considered a central element in decision-making and planning. Researchers should also examine the option of working with brokers and facilitators [**Q5**], as the researchers themselves may not have the necessary skills. Furthermore, they should concentrate on generating rather than on spreading knowledge.

Main challenges

To awaken stakeholders' interest in research results that are yet to be generated.

To exchange with stakeholders with diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

To bring stakeholders' different interests and perceptions together.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Build stakeholders' awareness of relevant context-specific questions;
- Consider stakeholder-specific benefits and risks at all level of decision-making;
- Find out what channels of communication will be effective for the different stakeholder groups.

Examine closely and search for options
- Create learning and dialogue platforms jointly with key stakeholders;
- Include possible intermediaries in the research process.

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Define expected outputs and outcomes with target groups;
- Agree on stakeholders' involvement in the research process and in capitalizing on findings.

We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak. *Epictetus*

P3 Clarify responsibilities

Issues

Partnerships are formed where implementing a project together generates more benefits than proceeding alone [**Q1**]. However, collaborating to achieve a shared goal does not mean that each and every step of the work has to be carried out together. Any partnership ultimately depends on each partner contributing what they are particularly skilled in doing. Dividing the work makes it necessary to clarify and assign the responsibilities of the partners involved and, based on this, their rights and obligations. However, not all aspects of responsibility in research partnerships can be divided. Responsibility «towards the outside», in particular, must be borne jointly by all partners; the same is true with regard to ethical questions. Determining the research agenda jointly [**P1**] and evaluating experience both underlie the concept of mutual responsibility, which makes joint learning possible [**P5**] and promotes generation of innovative knowledge.

Main challenges

To assess expected benefits (and costs) of sharing (or assigning) duties and tasks within the partnership.

To assign roles and responsibilities that are compatible with partners' competencies as well as with their preferences and social obligations.

To share responsibilities for obligations that are partner specific (e.g. obligations stemming from different agendas in the North and the South).

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Determine existing personal and group-specific preferences and obligations;
- Identify each partners' competencies and «comparative advantages».

Examine closely and search for options
- Clarify potential roles/duties in all phases of the project cycle;
- List the «inseparable responsibilities» (ethical and moral values, legal aspects, etc.);
- Share or assign responsibilities according to clarified rules and duties.

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Establish patterns for solving potential conflicts;
- Define internal Terms of Reference or a Memorandum of Understanding (governance) and a strategic plan.

Assuming responsibility is easy when bearing it can be left to others. *Querulix*

P4 Account to beneficiaries

Issues

The one who takes has to account to the one who gives. Although still widespread in research collaboration, this upward accountability formula is neither suitable nor effective. Restricting accountability to funders alone fails to take into account the fact that relevant research delivers benefits both to society and to science (by increasing the stock of knowledge). Answering to particular expectations of potential beneficiaries of research is thus an obligation, but also an effective means of communication and feedback. Being accountable «downward» to a specific group of beneficiaries can trigger an important echo, leading to enhanced and genuine partnerships, new research questions and, last but not least, to broader and deeper dissemination of results [**Q5**], [**Q6**]. However, in research partnerships relationships are often diverse, leading to complex obligations. Operationalising accountability requires not only a joint assessment of expected outcomes [**P2**] but also a discussion of the specific commitments of all research partners and stakeholders involved.

Main challenges

To incorporate accountability as an enabling factor rather than as a matter of compliance with imposed obligations.

To design accountability mechanisms making it possible for reporting to be linked with feedback loops (communication «in both directions»).

To handle the accountability web (upward, downward and inward accountability obligations) in a coherent and effective manner.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Understand mutual accountability as a means of communication and a learning process;
- Assess all partners' explicit and implicit accountability relations.

Examine closely and search for options
- Explore what accountability mechanisms are responsive to funders as well as to beneficiaries;
- Make accountability explicit in the indicator-based monitoring and evaluation system;
- Merge reporting requirements with mutual learning targets [**P5**].

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Define all partners' reporting obligations (upward downward and inward);
- Agree on common reporting formats wherever possible.

Do not sever your heart from your tongue. *Egyptian proverb*

P5 Promote mutual learning

Issues

The various parties involved in a research endeavour have a rich spectrum of highly diverse contextual and systemic knowledge. The more fully the potential for synergies inherent to this knowledge is tapped, the more knowledge and insights are multiplied – and the more promising the research project. The willingness of those involved to engage in dialogue and learning processes is a crucial precondition for generating added value at the institutional level. However, there is also a need for suitable tools and structures that can support learning processes. Institutional learning is based on constant observation and regular examination of achievements. On this basis, existing monitoring and evaluation systems are useful not only for taking stock (What have we achieved together?) but also for internal evaluation of experience, in terms of a navigation tool (How can our work together improve?). The emphasis here is on «together».

Main challenges

To foster partners' willingness to reflect not only on successful outcomes but also on shortcomings, failures, and unachieved objectives.

To create a learning culture that complies with the different perceptions and cultural backgrounds of the partners involved.

To combine long-term mutual learning processes with short-term accountability obligations in monitoring and evaluation activities.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Provide appropriate space (and resources) for mutual learning processes;
- Consider mutual evaluation as an explicit project aim;
- Commit to individual as well as institutional training and learning.

Examine closely and search for options
- Promote platforms for analysis, exchange and reflection, as well as regular face-to-face meetings;
- Share insights and experiences with other groups of researchers;
- Include stakeholders (politicians, donors, end-users) when capitalising on lessons learned [**P2**] [**P4**].

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Set expected learning targets for all phases of the research project cycle;
- Jointly adopt a monitoring and evaluation system that is based both on results and learning.

For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them. *Aristotle*

P6 Enhance capacities

Issues

The days when research partnerships were understood as vehicles for a one-way transfer of knowledge and technology from North to South are over. Today, the focus is on increasing both knowledge and know-how, while at the same time fostering the capacities of all parties involved, including all stakeholders and junior scientists. Both processes should enhance each other. Indeed, expectations have changed: North-South research partnerships are expected to help develop knowledge-based options and know-how for dealing with global challenges. Scientists need to address this increasing need for specific capacities including the ability to properly communicate effectively and engage with various groups of stakeholders [P2] [Q5]. In this respect, there is growing recognition, both in the South and the North, of the fact that the scientific potential of research partnerships spanning several regions needs to be tapped more fully. And last but not least, research communities in the North have increasingly come to realise that cooperation with partners from the South enhances their own scientific capacities as well.

Main challenges

To counteract low recognition of science and research both in the Southern hemisphere and in international development cooperation.

To demonstrate (and measure) the enhancement of capacities in the short and medium term.

To translate personal knowledge into sustainable institutional capacities and thus prevent loss of untapped human resources and brain drain.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify

- Understand capacity strengthening and capacity development as key to sustainable knowledge production [Q7];
- Clarify intended purposes of capacity development and strengthening.

Examine closely and search for options

- Insist on mutual capacity enhancement (including Northern partners);
- Promote on-the-job training facilities and platforms for scientific exchange.

Stipulate rules and procedures

- Aim for long-term and institutional research partnership;
- Secure core rather than project funding in the long run;
- Generate local political support and mobilise local financial resources.

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest. *Benjamin Franklin*

P7 Share data and networks

Issues

Transparency and unrestricted flow of information are the bread an butter of research in partnership aiming at outcomes relevant to society. This is true for interactions at the personal as well as institutional levels. But information is power and sharing information or opening information channels might very well lead to tangible losses. This is definitely an obstacle for research partnerships, as their intrinsic purpose is precisely to generate and transfer knowledge. What incentive systems enhance transparency and foster the flow of information? Practical experience shows that in North-South partnerships, as a rule, knowledge and information are not distributed one-sidedly: both sides have information and relationships that are crucial for the success of their joint research project. Negotiating the «give and take» can lead to a win-win situation. A system of incentives is needed in support of the following formula: those who provide transparency and share information receive more in return.

Main challenges

To identify and rate the different partners' specific knowledge (methodological, contextual, systemic, and institutional knowledge).

To dismantle geographic barriers in general, and to mutually integrate partners in own networks and platforms.

To build a sense of mutual confidence, an imperative for enhancing transparency in often unequal relationships.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Identify already available data and what further data are needed;
- Interpret exchange and interaction with scientific networks as a common task.

Examine closely and search for options
- Assess expectations as well as the information and knowledge base of all partners (and relevant stakeholders) involved;
- Outline a «win-win framework» for planning and governance of information sharing;
- Discuss the interest, fears and expectations of all partners involved.

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Adopt a plan and a budget line for networking activities;
- Integrate a data policy in the governance guidelines;
- Develop an internal complaint mechanism and/or appoint an arbitration board.

The best way to get information is to give it. *Attributed to Niccolò Machiavelli*

P8 Disseminate results

Issues

Every research project builds on existing knowledge, irrespective of whether the goal is to generate specialised, systems, or methodological knowledge. New research insights are ultimately always expansions of an existing knowledge base. However, the challenge for both the research community and the other «users» of research findings is to filter out those insights from the immense pool of scientific contributions that they find relevant. Every researcher must therefore disseminate his or her findings in forms that enable potential «users» to find, understand, and use them. This is not an easy task, in particular not for transdisciplinary and transboundary research which generally interacts with numerous different target groups: research findings must first be translated into different «formats and languages» appropriate to the respective target audience, and secondly, they must be directed towards effective communication channels. This requires careful selection of journals, media, conferences, and platforms, and, if need be, support from facilitators or brokers [**Q5**].

Main challenges

To counter the prevailing view that recognition in an international journal is the main or even only way to disseminate results.

To resist output pressure in the short term and to insist on disseminating results beyond Northern libraries.

To translate results into formats and languages that are appropriate to the different target audiences.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Map potential users of your results;
- Examine the involvement of scientific peers and key-stakeholders as gate-openers to relevant debates.

Examine closely and search for options
- Formulate clear and differentiated dissemination goals in your project design;
- Specify user-specific communication channels and exchange mechanisms.

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Agree on scientific and contextual (user-specific) dissemination roadmaps [**Q5**];
- Harmonise accounting obligations [**P4**] with your dissemination strategy;
- Plan the required steps in the project cycle and ensure financing.

Not every lightning strike brings illumination. *German proverb*

P9 Pool profits and merits

Issues

Researchers cannot sell their results as a farmer would sell potatoes on a vegetable market. Most trans-boundary research partnerships produce knowledge as a public good. Researchers get tangible benefits from publishing in scientific journals and the recognition as experts this earns them, in addition to their salary. It goes without saying that these benefits should be distributed as equally as possible among all involved in a partnership. This includes equal acknowledgement of authors as well as selection of a publication channel that caters to all interests. Profit distribution can be free of conflicts in cases where investors have achieved their goals and researchers have been able to publish their work as desired and agreed upon. However, the situation becomes more difficult in cases where several of the parties involved lay claim to the same piece of the cake – particularly when property rights or patent rights are at stake. In such cases it is essential to set clear rules early on.

Main challenges

To assess potential profits and merits of research activities and agree in advance on a fair allocation to all partners (e.g. authorship, publications, patent rights).

To iron out inherent disparities between partners with regard to academic status and decision power.

To determine property-rights holders in publicly-funded research projects.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Map expected and unexpected profits and merits of the planned research activities;
- Check about potential commercial benefits of results.

Examine closely and search for options
- Create transparency in all budgetary and financial matters;
- Negotiate an allocation formula (institutional and/or individual) at the very beginning;
- Consider shared authorship and copyright as a minimal requirement.

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Stipulate a fair and mutually binding arrangement;
- Review compliance with the agreement jointly and periodically;
- If appropriate, designate an external arbitration board in case of conflict.

The balance distinguishes not between gold and lead. *George Herbert*

P10 Apply results

Issues

Many research projects in North-South partnerships belong to the category of result-oriented or implementation-oriented research [Q4]. This means that the phase of disseminating scientific results [P8] must be followed by a phase of implementation and application. This can mean many things. A newly-bred crop variety, for example, has to find its way to producers and be accepted by them. In such cases, non governmental organisations or producers' associations can be possible partners in implementation. In cases where policy recommendations form an explicit part of the research project, these recommendations, once formulated, must be made known to those responsible at the political level. In any case, effective implementation of research results means speaking the language of the users [P4] and presenting the results in such a way that they have a «meaning» for users [Q6]. More importantly: the earlier and the more actively researchers enter into a dialogue with potential user groups [P2] and their supporting institutions, the more fertile the ground on which the results will eventually fall.

Main challenges

To translate scientific knowledge/findings into context-specific application in general and to reduce implementation gaps in particular.

To withstand funders' pressure to produce «quick results» (outputs) rather than relevant outcomes.

To sensitise political decision-makers to integrating new scientific insights into policies and strategies.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Demonstrate the benefits of applying results in given contexts and for specific target groups;
- Identify potential brokers and facilitators [Q5].

Examine closely and search for options
- Locate suitable national and sub-national channels for public information (media, event etc.);
- Outline facilitators specific roles in implementation;
- Make use of platforms for dialogue with stakeholders [P4].

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Integrate application/implementation phases explicitly in your project cycle and ensure financing;
- Agree on a realistic schedule and financing plan.

Knowing is easier than doing. *Common saying*

P11 Secure outcomes

Issue

Many North-South partnerships are tied to individual research projects. The short-term nature of these partnerships often leads to loss of existing achievements, particularly in the South, with capacities left unused and researchers migrating away in search of other employment opportunities (brain drain). This need not necessarily happen if efforts are made early on, before a partnership ends [**Q7**], to secure what has been achieved. Integration into research networks (including South-South cooperation), targeted capacity development, and enhancing visibility by means of publications are some of many possible entry points for loosening dependencies and creating continuity. Above all, however, governments and international organisations must meet the challenge of leading research in the South out of marginalisation and onto the path of «sustainable research».

Main challenges

To ensure the commitment of supporting/funding agencies to long-term engagement and for core funding.

To incorporate local research institutions and their programmes into national research environments and help strengthen these environments.

To avoid that human resources remain untapped, and to prevent brain drain at the end of research projects in North-South partnerships.

Steps to application

Be aware and clarify
- Include sustainability targets both in strategic planning and in the design of project cycles;
- Support policy dialogue between recipient governments and donors.

Examine closely and search for options
- Diversify financing resources;
- Generate political commitment and local financial resources;
- Promote think tank and consulting capabilities actively.

Stipulate rules and procedures
- Determine personal career planning as early as possible;
- Plan a sequence of projects within a larger program and build alliances.

The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The next best time is now. *Ugandan proverb*

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Citations
Bruno Stöckli, Urs Wiesmann, Jon-Andri Lys, 2014: *A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles, 2nd edition (1st edition 2012),* Bern, Switzerland. Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE).

Urs Wiesmann, Bruno Stöckli, Jon-Andri Lys, 2014: *A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 7 Questions, 2nd edition (1st edition 2012),* Bern, Switzerland. Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE).

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KFPE has updated its 11 Principles for Research in Partnership – in use for over 10 years already – based on current trends and experience. In addition, we have also developed 7 fundamental questions that point to factors enabling or hindering research in partnership. The 7 questions are meant to help users to better understand and implement the 11 principles. They examine various aspects of research partnerships and also intend to stimulate reflection and debate.

www.11principles.org
In addition to the above-mentioned documents, a special web platform for the 11 principles is under construction. The web platform is intended as a tool to help make research partnerships successful.

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank all those who contributed in one way or another to the revision and new design of the «11 KFPE Principles»; the many valuable comments and feedbacks we received during an international consultation process on draft versions of the documents significantly helped to improve the quality of the final product.

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Towards equitable and effective collaboration!

Q1 Why work in partnership?

While many forms of individual and collaborative research processes can yield sound and innovative results, carrying out research in partnership within specialised scientific communities or across disciplines and schools of thought has become key to high-quality research at the global level.

Transboundary research partnerships
We consider transboundary research partnerships a specific form of the global collaborative research effort. They encompass research partnerships which cross economic, social, and cultural borders or divides – in short, they are transboundary in various dimensions. Most typically they are established between researchers from countries with a high density of research and researchers, and countries with a low such density.

Oversimplifying, one often talks of North-South research partnerships, although they include a wide range of collaborations between the global North, East, and South.

Added value as a basic requirement
Transboundary research partnerships are meaningful when partners, both from the South and the North, can expect significant added value from their collaboration.

The added value can refer to:
- findings, results, and changed perspectives,
- technologies and methodologies,
- capacities and career opportunities,
- exposure e.g. to broader research communities,
- contextual and institutional access.

The broad range of research partnerships
Transboundary research partnerships can therefore make sense for a broad range of research:
- from disciplinary to interdisciplinary,
- from short- to long-term,
- from basic to applied.

The need for transboundary research partnerships
However, research partnerships become essential when research addresses issues related to development in the South or at the global level, and in interactions between the global North and the global South.

The reason is that such issues are usually:
- strongly value-loaded,
- related to conflicting stakes and powers,
- bound to high dynamics in complex contexts,
- and coupled with high factual uncertainties.

Experience shows that complementarities between competences and knowledge systems, as well as the exchange on underlying values and positions in intercultural research partnerships, effectively promote sound and relevant research contributions to development.

In addition, they enhance capacities and experiences among all the partners, and they can contribute significantly to more evidence-based planning and decision-making in settings where power disparities tend to prevail.

Q2 How to ensure cohesion?

In spite of their usefulness – or even their necessity – research partnerships are exposed to strong dividing forces that tend to jeopardise fruitful collaboration. These dividing forces are rooted in the social embedment of the involved parties:

Dividing forces in research partnerships

The Northern research partners are exposed to North-driven and largely disciplinary reference systems in which the competition mechanism of «publish or perish» has gained additional weight in recent decades and in which inter- and particularly transdisciplinary and development-oriented research holds a weak position.

The Southern research partners are – due to their relatively low numbers – generally absorbed in a wide range of teaching, consultancy, and representation activities. They are faced with a low standing of research in their societies, and therefore have difficulty in coping with the competition mechanisms of the North-driven international science community.

The agendas of governments, development agencies, and donors who commission development-oriented research are politically contested, in many cases not rooted in the concerned contexts and societies, and relatively unstable due to the pressure of following the fashions of the largely North-driven global development scene.

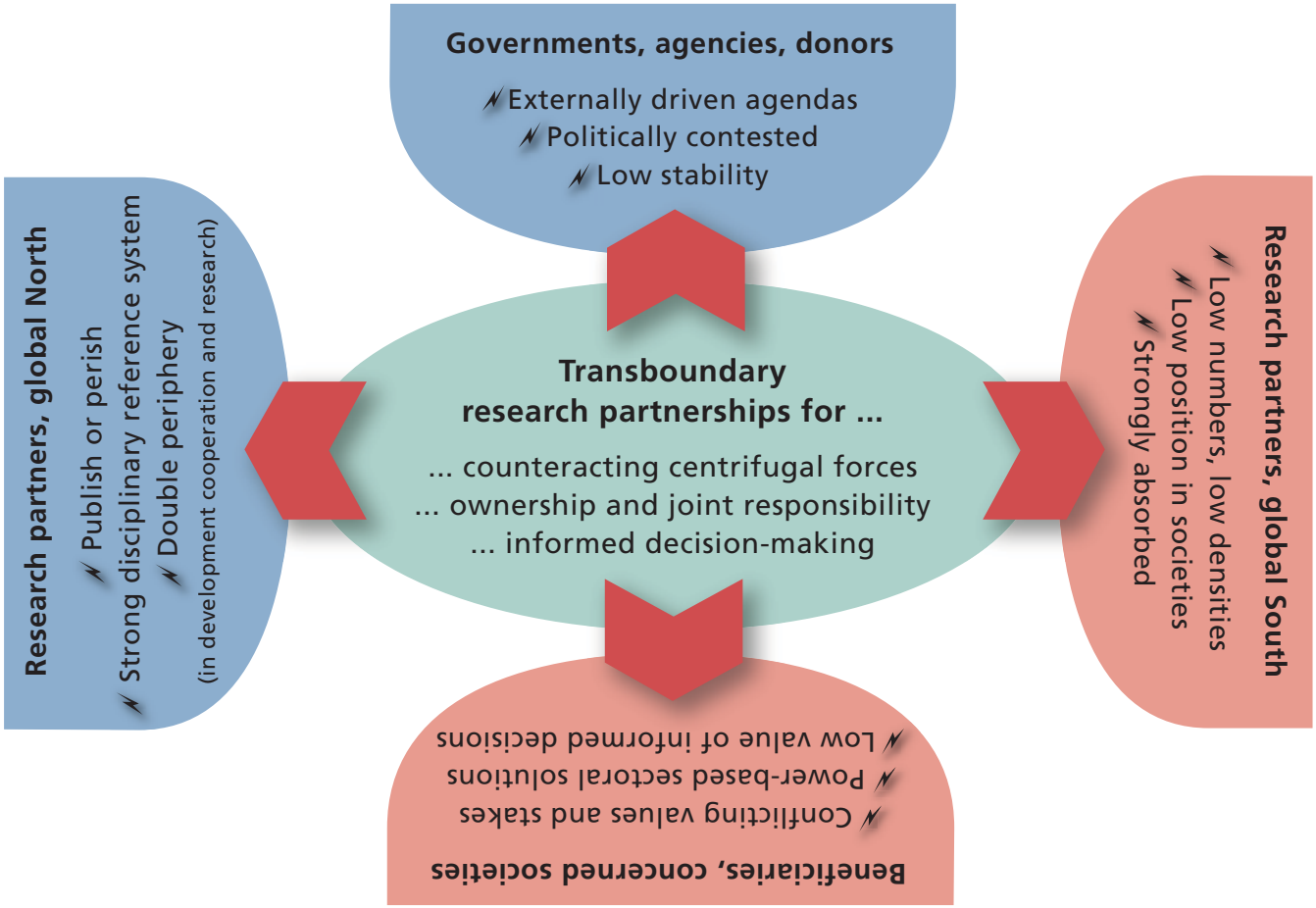
The concerned societies and beneficiaries are exposed to highly conflicting values and stakes, such that power-based and sectoral solutions prevail against informed decision-making in development approaches.

Strategies to counterbalance dividing forces

Research partnerships are exposed to these dividing forces. But at the same time research partnerships can act as an important catalyst to counterbalance these forces and thereby build bridges to promote the relevance of research as well as more informed and participatory decision-making.

This catalyst function is achieved by following the 11 partnership principles and in particular:

- by developing joint ownership and responsibility for research between Southern and Northern partners,
- by strengthening the academic and societal positions of the Southern partners – and to some degree also those of the Northern partners,
- by providing support for informed decision-making and thereby counteracting power-based decisions and solutions in the context of conflicting stakes and values, and
- by forming alliances that can voice unheard stakes and act as «early warners» and therefore be a reference for more balanced and stable agendas to governments and agencies.


Governments, agencies, donors
Externally driven agendas
Politically contested
Low stability
Research partners, global North
Publish or perish
Strong disciplinary reference system
Double periphery
(in development cooperation and research)
Transboundary
research partnerships for ...
... counteracting centrifugal forces
... ownership and joint responsibility
... informed decision-making
Research partners, global South
Low numbers, low densities
Low position in societies
Strongly absorbed
Beneficiaries, concerned societies
Conflicting values and stakes
Power-based sectoral solutions
Low value of informed decisions

Q3 What form of collaboration?

Varying forms of research collaboration
Research partnerships may cover different types of collaboration. They usually start in relation to a single research project with clear objectives and a limited timespan. If the collaboration was successful they may develop into more long-term networks for exchange and collaboration, or into larger research programmes. Based on this, research partnerships can evolve into long-term alliances in which research agendas are jointly and pro-actively promoted, and successive research and transfer projects can be re-thought in the logic of a larger programme, coordinated according to shared goals and commitment.

The strength of the research partnership approach is that partnerships can gradually develop into these different forms of collaboration; this increases the relevance and impact of research efforts.

Variation in the complexity of disciplinary composition
Research partnerships can also vary broadly in relation to the complexity of disciplinary composition. In disciplinary or multidisciplinary endeavours research partnerships are based on complementarities in competences or in access to means and transfer channels. Additionally, complementarities in modes of knowledge production play a role in interdisciplinary efforts.

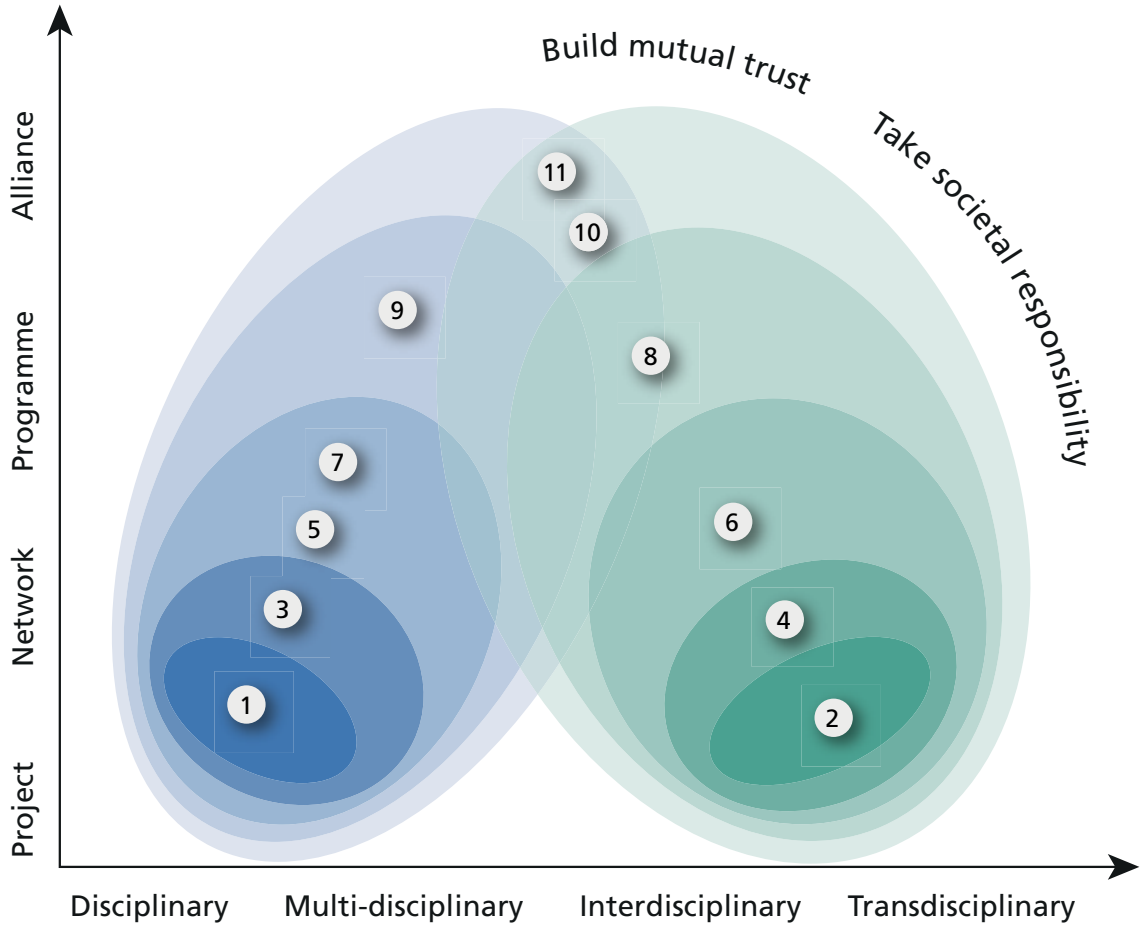
Complexity requires research partnerships
Research partnerships make sense at all levels of complexity. However, with increasing complexity they not only make sense; they become a necessity: for example when a research question necessitates a strong science-society interface and therefore a transdisciplinary approach. In such cases they become a key means of dealing with stakes, power, and values in research and its societal relevance and impact.

This necessity is given by the fact that ultimately only mutual trust and shared societal responsibility can create enough impetus and innovation for research to impact on complex «real-world» problems.

The 11 principles in relation to the complexity of collaborations
The 11 partnership principles apply to the whole range of research partnerships. However, their importance and weight vary with the programmatic complexity of research partnerships:

- Principles [**P1**] and [**P3**] on setting agendas and on clarified responsibilities are crucial in disciplinary and multi-disciplinary projects.
- Principles [**P2**] and [**P4**] on interaction and accountability gain additional importance when the project is located closer to the science-society interface.
- With increasing programmatic complexity principles [**P5**] to [**P9**], relating to learning, capacities, data, results, and merits, gain in importance.
- Finally, principles [**P10**] and [**P11**] on application and securing outcomes deserve special attention in highly complex partnership settings.

For practical purposes it is therefore advisable to clearly define the complexity level of a research partnership endeavour, to explicitly negotiate the expected objectives and added values for the participating parties, and to thoroughly address those partnership principles that are particularly critical in relation to the chosen form of collaboration.



1. Set the agenda together
2. Interact with stakeholders
3. Clarify responsibilities
4. Account to beneficiaries
5. Promote mutual learning
6. Enhance capacities
7. Share data and networks
8. Disseminate results
9. Pool profits and merits
10. Apply results
11. Secure outcomes

Q4 Which foci and priorities?

Three basic goals of research partnerships
It is relatively seldom that research partnerships aim purely at knowledge gains in the form of new research results. In most cases, it is implicit that these results should be societally relevant and have an impact. It is also implicit that most partnership actions contribute to the individual and institutional capacities and competences of the involved parties.

The triangle of innovative research, capacity development, and societal relevance and impact therefore very often forms the basic goal-orientation of partnership-based research. The assumption is that high-quality research leads to high relevance and is accompanied by significant capacity development.

Conflicts between the three goals
However, practical experience and theoretical considerations suggest that the three basic goals of innovative research, capacity development, and societal relevance and impact are in conflict:

Whereas high quality research has to deal with the «unknown» at the forefront of knowledge and aims at findings that can be generalised, capacity development requires concentration on consolidated knowledge and methodologies, and societal relevance and impact demand concretely contextualised knowledge and innovations.

In addition, research and capacity development tend to focus on understanding processes and dynamics in the sense of systems knowledge, whereas society expects answers on what can be done and therefore demands increased target and especially transformation knowledge.

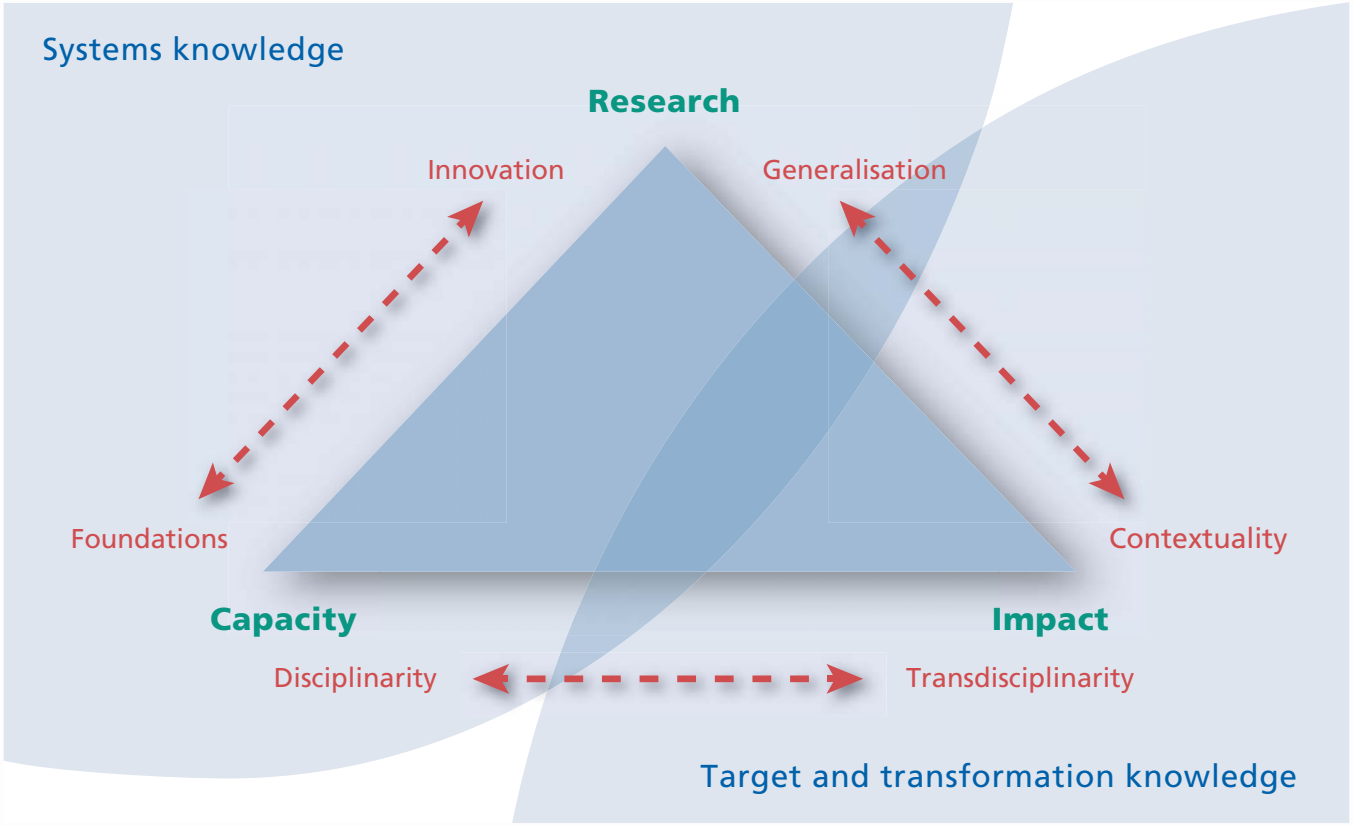
These conflicting orientations are also reflected in the disciplinary composition: whereas capacity development primarily requires concentration on disciplinary foundations, innovative research findings often emerge at or between the boundaries of established disciplines, and high societal relevance requires science-society interfaces in the sense of transdisciplinarity.

Options to deal with conflicting goals
In concretely planning and implementing research partnerships, this conflict between the basic goals has to be taken explicitly into account.

› One option is to clearly prioritise in one or two of these goals, e.g. combining research with a component of capacity development. This is normally adequate in partnership actions or projects that are clearly limited in time and scope, and it requires that priority-setting is clearly communicated and negotiated within the partnership and with boundary partners.

› The second option is to maintain all three goals but to clearly phase and/or to subdivide the endeavour into components that specifically address each of the three goals. This is adequate in research partnerships that go beyond single projects and encompass networks, programmes, and long-term pro-active alliances. Experience suggests that it is worth spending sufficient time clearly identifying the goal-orientation of each phase and component of a partnership endeavour.

Depending on the chosen priority goal the importance and weight of the 11 partnership principles vary, allowing participants to concentrate on the most important principles in framing the research partnership.


Systems knowledge
Research
Innovation
Generalisation
Foundations
Contextuality
Capacity
Impact
Disciplinarity
Transdisciplinarity
Target and transformation knowledge

Q5 Who to involve?

Four social orientations of research
Beyond the core partners of a research partnership other actors have to be involved, or links and bridges established.

- The scientific communities active in the field of the research;
- The agencies commissioning the research and/or using the results;
- The users and beneficiaries of the research outcomes;
- The general public interested in the field of the research.

In most research endeavours all four orientations play a role. This implies that forms of involvement have to be established.

Challenges of the social orientations
The type of involvement varies considerably and requires clear formats for outputs and communication. The problem is twofold:

- First, the various orientations put research partners under high and conflicting output pressure and may jeopardise the core activity of sound, novel, and reflexive research.
- Second, these interactions require specific skills that may not be available in the team of a research partnership. It follows that intermediaries play a key role. It is crucial to anticipate this and plan the research endeavour accordingly.

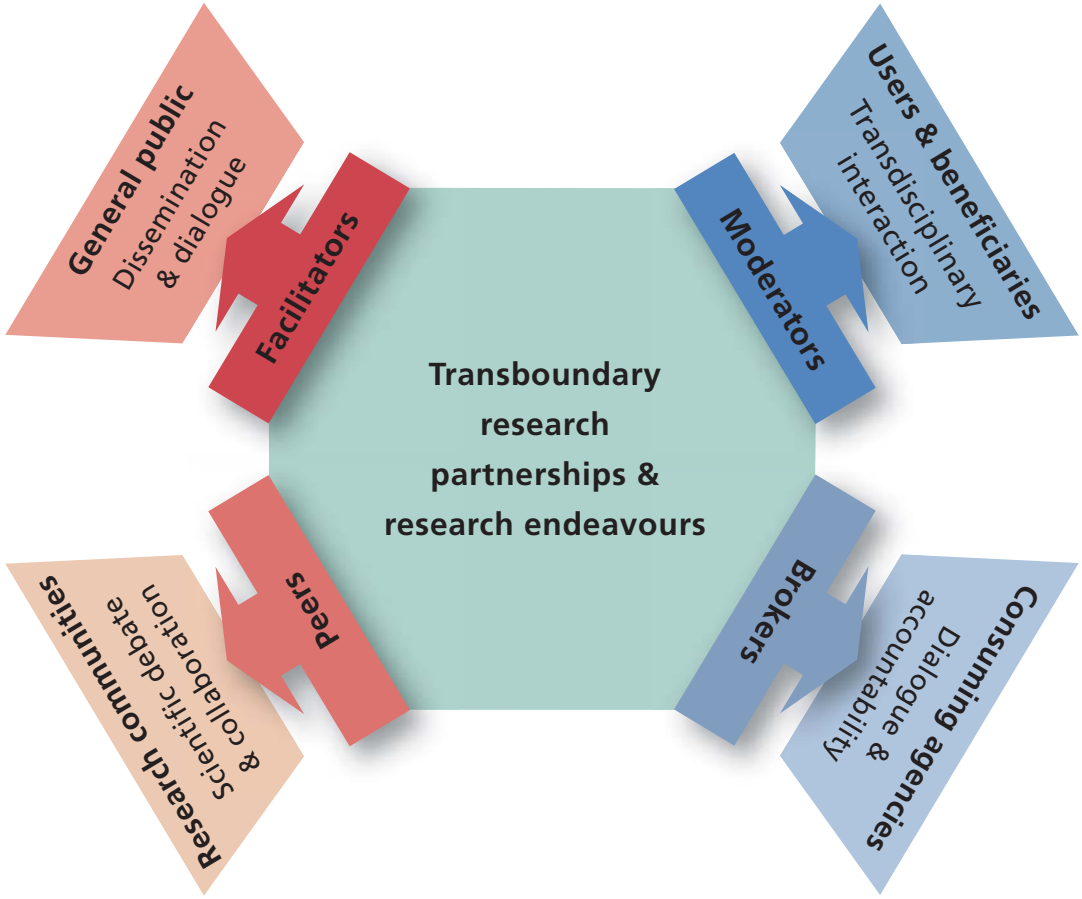
Four types of intermediaries
Four types of intermediaries correspond to the four general types of orientation:

Peers
Scientific peers play a key role in enabling scientific debates and international collaboration, helping to gain scientific recognition, and disseminating findings. But many research partnerships cannot draw on an established peer group, especially when their research is interdisciplinary and context-oriented. Investing in building the capacity of such peers through long-term alliances and global networks becomes key to enhancing the success of research partnerships.

Brokers
Research is not always considered an important partner by agencies or governments. Instead, knowledge is seen as a commodity that can be bought to fill perceived gaps. However, research can become highly relevant to development when a dialogue between research and agencies exists that goes beyond contracts. But such a dialogue requires brokers who are able to bridge the institutional gaps and logics between the two sides. Brokers can often be found within the agencies, be it in the North or the South. Entering into long-term and content-driven dialogue with such brokers can be crucial to ensuring the development effectiveness of research partnerships.

Moderators
The relevance of research and the acceptability and sustainability of its outcomes depend greatly on interaction with target groups and potential beneficiaries. Moderating and facilitating such processes requires skills that do not necessarily exist within research teams, and may have to be found in their broader collaborative network. However, the intercultural composition of research partnerships increases the chances that contextually adequate moderation can be carried out by team members themselves.

Facilitators
Disseminating results in a format that actually contributes to informed debate is challenging in times of an overload of short-lived information. Working with journalists and educators can help to ensure that research results are communicated appropriately to specific target groups.


General public
Dissemination & dialogue
Facilitators
Users & beneficiaries
Transdisciplinary interaction
Moderators
Transboundary research partnerships & research endeavours
Peers
Research communities
Scientific debate & collaboration
Brokers
Consuming agencies
Dialogue & accountability

Q6 Where to create relevance?

In order to be deemed relevant, research usually faces a demand from commissioning agencies or from society at large to create an impact in the sense of changing real-world situations for the better. However, research alone cannot have this impact.

Three steps to ensuring relevance
In order to achieve the desired scientific and societal relevance, a number of additional inputs are needed. These include human resources (support staff, e.g. in knowledge management and communications), material resources, specific methodologies, as well as time and creativity, which enable the knowledge generated through research to achieve relevance in three steps:

Output: The increment of knowledge generated on an issue and its availability in the form of concrete products.

Outcome: The importance assigned to knowledge, and its uptake in a specific societal context.

Impact: Changes in real-world situations through action that has resulted from societal uptake of the new knowledge.

It is important to note that the output is under the full control of researchers – e.g. of a research partnership project – whereas the outcome and the impact can only be controlled by researchers to a limited degree.

Planning for societally relevant research
Planning for societal relevance ideally starts with defining an overall goal, or identifying a problem for which impacts are intended. The second step is to anticipate within which social group the research results should trigger outcomes. Finally, based on these intended impacts and outcomes, focused outputs and research activities can be planned.

Types of knowledge required
A research partnership endeavour is relevant when it creates knowledge outputs that shed light on pathways to the intended impacts, and when the outcome relates to social actors, whose actions are crucial in reaching the impact. Consequently, three types of knowledge must be addressed in order to achieve relevance:

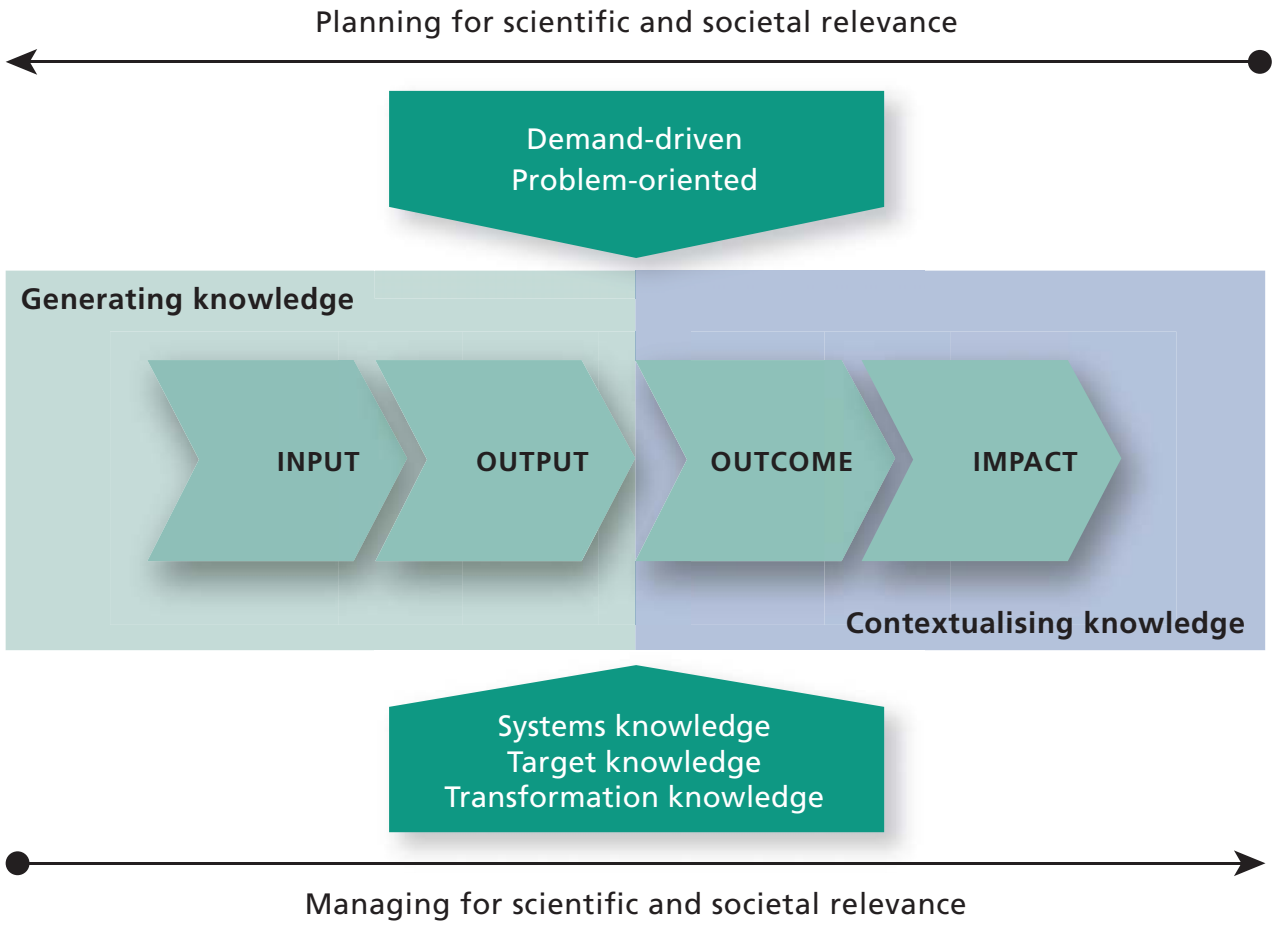
Systems knowledge that analyses the underlying dynamics and interrelations of the development issue at hand.

Target knowledge that addresses synergies and conflicts of the development issue within the framework of overall development and related social values.

Transformation knowledge that identifies pathways to solve or mitigate the development issue at hand by linking systems and target knowledge.

Because they have an intercultural base and offer synergetic competences, research partnerships are particularly capable of bridging these knowledge types. A particular advantage of research partnerships is that they concentrate on specific development contexts, thus making research results more relevant to society. However, this advantage often conflicts with mainstream scientific reference systems [**Q4**].

Required social embedment
Good research outputs alone do not amount to knowledge adopted by society. Interaction with and involvement of actors from society is therefore key to the relevance of research partnerships [**Q5**], making the involvement of peers, brokers, moderators, and facilitators mentioned above indispensable. This in turn requires that research partnerships be a long-term commitment.


Planning for scientific and societal relevance
Demand-driven
Problem-oriented
Generating knowledge
INPUT
OUTPUT
OUTCOME
IMPACT
Contextualising knowledge
Systems knowledge
Target knowledge
Transformation knowledge
Managing for scientific and societal relevance

Q7 When to consolidate outcomes?

The danger of short-lived outcomes
An outcome is knowledge that is recognised and taken up outside the research team that has generated the knowledge, be it in the broader science community, among governments or agencies, or in the society that was meant to benefit in the first place. In times of information overload – where the newest snippets of information are mistaken as new knowledge – outcomes tend to be short-lived. This can lead to the knowledge remaining superficial and not rooted within society, causing the contribution to the intended impact to become insignificant. For this reason, efforts to consolidate outcomes are important in research endeavours that aim at relevance within and beyond the science community, and they are essential in transboundary research partnerships.

Three ways of consolidating outcomes
In developing, planning, and executing research partnerships three main ways of consolidating outcomes should be considered, all of which are time-sensitive, meaning that time plays a key role in consolidating outcomes and achieving relevance.

Transdisciplinary and disciplinary interaction on outputs

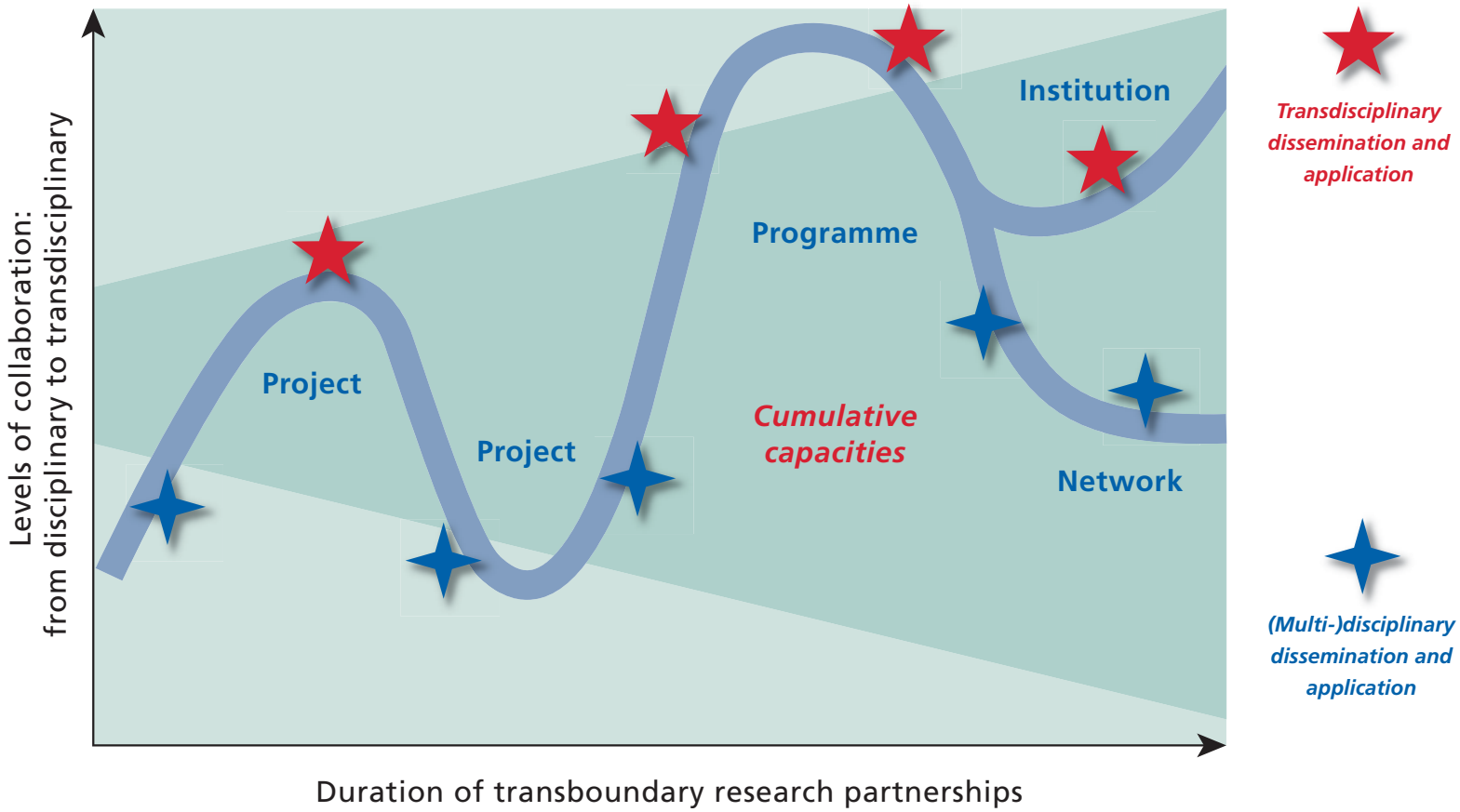
Consolidating outputs into outcomes requires intense interaction between researchers and the relevant social actors and institutions. This interaction may be low-key and continuous, but requires well-timed special efforts and interactive events. As research partnerships are only successful and relevant when they also address the people they are meant to benefit, outside the realm of science, transdisciplinary interaction with concerned populations and disciplinary interaction with the science community must take place iteratively. In other words, observing a sequence of phases of societal and scientific orientation is key to consolidating outcomes of research partnerships.

Institutional consolidation

Research partnership endeavours are usually timed in single projects and bound to specific tasks. It is possible to reach a good level of collaboration, integration, and output in such partnership projects. However, relevance and consolidated outcomes require embedment into broader interaction and collaboration with scientific and non-scientific target groups, and the involvement of linking actors [**Q5**]. A research partnership project should therefore strive to develop into a research programme or to sequence projects into a programme and, eventually, build a long-term collaborative network. Against the background of unstable institutions and weak institutional memories found in some set-ups of research partnerships, developing integrative and development-oriented research institutions may be an important step to consolidating outcomes and capacities.

Accompanying capacity development

Capacities – both individual and institutional – developed in research partnerships are perhaps the most effective consolidation of outcomes. This implies that research has to include disciplinary and transdisciplinary capacity development that focuses on practice-orientation and methodology, and includes theoretical and reflexive components. This type of inbuilt capacity development significantly differs from formalised textbook training. The current trend found among many agencies and governments to clearly separate research and training is therefore very regrettable and counteracts the consolidation of outcomes. Experience shows that researchers and practitioners trained in research partnerships often form the backbone of long-term collaborative networks and thus also contribute to institutional consolidation.


Levels of collaboration:
from disciplinary to transdisciplinary
Project
Project
Programme
Institution
Network
Cumulative capacities
Duration of transboundary research partnerships
Transdisciplinary dissemination and application
(Multi-)disciplinary dissemination and application