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'Doing good' for the families? An ethnographic study of everyday ethics in a cross-sectoral social partnership in the Finnish LAPE programme

Introduction

> I am sitting in a LAPE group meeting and wondering what today's meeting's core purpose will be. Are we just sitting there, chatting and wasting our time? Our discussion jumps from one topic to another in a haphazard way, and it feels ridiculous. A room full of clever and busy people, but this is the level of our meeting. I wonder if the others understand or if there is a problem with me? I am looking around. One person is not talking at all, covertly browsing her cell phone, while another looks confused. It seems like the others are just as uncertain as I am. (An autoethnographic diary note, LAPE meeting, 13 March 2019)

The purpose of the current paper is to explore the everyday work dynamics of a cross-sectoral social partnership (CSSP), focusing on the particular case of the LAPE (Child and Family Services Change) programme in the Finnish town of Ulvila. Specifically, we are interested in the ethics of the working practices of the CSSP, consisting of its leaders, experts and policymakers in the public, private and third sectors. In the present paper, therefore, we attempt to answer the following questions: *How is the CSSP negotiated between various parties in (un)ethical ways in the LAPE programme,* and *what types of implications do these working practices have for the wider context of child and family services?*

The recent restructuring and integration of social and health care services makes it timely to research CSSPs in Finland. The coordination of services of different sectors is part of a large social reform with the aim of creating cross-sector service entities through partnerships. Critical service interfaces occur, for example, in services for children, young people and families, which is why reforming child and family services is an important part of service restructuring.

Our study is based on ethnographic research material collected from the Finnish LAPE programme. The empirical evidence consists of ethnographic field notes, semistructured interviews with 20 municipal leaders of the LAPE group and other actors from different sectors of the LAPE programme, autoethnographic diary notes taken by the first author of this paper and numerous informal conversations between the first author and various agents involved in the LAPE programme more broadly.

The present work contributes to the study of CSSPs by providing a more nuanced understanding of the everyday-level dynamics of ethic actions and decision making in cross-sectoral social partnerships. This is accomplished by focusing on the everyday work practices of the CSSP in the LAPE group, which is introduced in more detail in the methodology section. We argue that the everyday dynamics of the CSSP could offer a 'backstage' (informal) view of the organisation, in which the social relations between people are not strictly attached to their formal nominations, statuses and positions in the organisation (Parviainen, 2011), while the 'onstage' perspective could be interpreted as the official, polished and 'clean' façade of the organisation or group. Hence, any unethical (such as spontaneous, wild, compassionate, affective, offensive or inappropriate) practices and behaviours are more likely to be expressed and, thus, visible in informal settings. Therefore, exploring the 'behind the scenes' of cross-sector partnerships could offer us a more in-depth understanding of their characteristics and members than simply looking at the 'surface'.

Theoretical background: building on the everyday ethics of cross-sectoral partnerships

The research on cross-sectoral partnerships has increased in popularity in recent years (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Andrews & Entwistle, 2010; Bryson et al., 2015). Generally, the research on CSSPs draws on multiple and varied theoretical trajectories, from institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Vurro et al., 2010) to the theories of governmentality (Foucault, 2007, 2008; Miller & Rose, 2008; Enroth, 2014). We are specifically interested in *cross-sector partnerships that address social issues* and, therefore, focus particularly on the works on CSSPs, such as those of Vurro et al. (2010) and of Selsky and Parker (2005). However, CSSPs have often been examined from the point of view of institutional theory (Vurro et al., 2010; Selsky & Parker, 2005) and resource dependence (Ahmadsimab & Chowdhury, 2015; Malatesta & Smith, 2014). These studies examine, among other aspects, the institutional logics at play in CSSPs (Vurro et al., 2010; Hesse et al., 2019), thus operating more at the macro- and meso-levels of analysis.

CSSPs are defined 'as cross-sector projects formed explicitly to address social issues and causes that actively engage the partners on an ongoing basis' (Selsky & Parker, 2005, p. 850). In CSSPs, organisations jointly address challenges such as economic development, poverty alleviation or environmental sustainability (Selsky & Parker, 2005, p. 850). CSSPs aim to solve societal challenges that would be difficult to solve by one sector alone (Hesse et al., 2019; Dentoni et al., 2016; Waddock, 1989). CSSPs can be formal, such as in hybrid forms of organisation (Battilana & Lee, 2014), or informal, such as in task forces (Westley & Vredenburg, 1997; Hesse et al., 2019, pp.

680–681). However, the multiple actors in CSSPs join partnerships and collaborate with different motives, needs and behaviours (Selsky & Parker, 2010).

The literature has distinguished that there are different *stages* in CSPPs: *formation activities,* as depicted in the study by Westley and Vredenburg (1997), *implementation activities,* such as governance structure and leadership characteristics (Selsky & Parker, 2005, p. 855), along with the *outcomes from* CSSPs, such as quantifiable results and less measurable outcomes including system capacity for learning (Selsky & Parker, 2005, p. 855). There are also studies that examine the features that influence CSSPs' activities at more than one stage; according to Selsky and Parker (2005, p. 855), these include power, trust and stakeholder roles. CSSPs frequently 'remain at an early stage of developing structures', meaning that they, for example, lack a formal cooperation agreement and aligned objectives (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Hesse et al., 2019, p. 680). Partnerships promoted by business actors dominate the research on CSSPs, focusing less on the perspectives of nonprofit and public sector organisations (Hesse et al., 2019, p. 683; see also Vurro et al., 2010, p. 50). Our study focuses on CSSPs among nonprofit and public sector organisations.

Vurro et al. (2010, p. 39) examine how CSSPs can be managed across different contexts, here by drawing on an institutional logics perspective together with cross-boundary collaboration perspective. They illustrate 'how, depending on prevailing institutional logics, intervention models underlying the CSSP have to emphasise either the business soundness of the initiative or its social value, together with a consistent leadership style'. CSSPs can yield benefits at the individual, organisational, sectoral and societal levels (Selsky & Parker, 2010, p. 21) and enable social change (Vurro et al., 2010). CSSPs can also enable social innovations (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010), which refer to 'new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations' (European Commission, 2010, p. 9; Fougère et al., 2017, p. 832). Social innovations also relate to 'the development of new forms of organisation and interactions to respond to social issues' (BEPA, 2010, p. 43; Fougère et al., 2017, p. 828). However, CSSPs are not without their problems, albeit, to date, CSSPs are mostly discussed in a positive tone. Critics point, for example, to the limited success of various CSSP initiatives in being able to bring genuine social change and in enabling real citizen participation (Seitanidi & Crane, 2013).

In this context, the concept of ethics is generally used to remove impurities, so as to demonstrate impartiality and objectivity and to ensure that the 'research subjects' are protected from harmful malpractices and abuse. In the current paper, however, we consider the concept of ethics in

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practice, which is characterised by the complexities and vulnerabilities of the people whom we observe as researchers (Bell & Willmott, 2019).

Methodology

(Auto)ethnography as a research approach

In the current study, we apply an ethnographic approach (see, e.g., Van Maanen, 2011; Yanow, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009) to understand the detailed day-to-day actions of the LAPE programme group that we studied. Ethnography can be viewed both as a method (i.e., a technique for collecting research material) and as a methodology consisting of a theoretical and philosophical framework (Brewer, 1994, p. 231). Throughout the current paper, we underline the nature of ethnography as a process of experiencing, interpreting and representing knowledge about culture, an organisation or an individual based on the ethnographers' own experiences (Pink, 2011). By viewing ethnography as more of a research approach than a concrete, predefined set of methodological tools to be used in the field (Van Maanen, 2011), we find its strength first-hand in engaging in a particular social setting, such as in the LAPE group explored here.

Ethnographic fieldwork is usually considered a long-term project although researchers from disciplines other than anthropology often conduct fieldwork within shorter time frames (Heyl, 2011). Similarly, the first author of the present paper attended the meetings of the executive team of the LAPE programme in Ulvila between November 2019 and April 2020. Therefore, a part of the research material consists of autoethnographical diary notes of the first author. The strengths of autoethnography include capturing highly personal, emotional and in-depth insights of a specific research topic that would otherwise remain hidden (Wall, 2006). In contrast, difficulties in remaining critical about the research and potential role conflicts remain because the researcher is both the producer of the research material and the one who analyses and reflects upon it (Karra & Phillips, 2008). Therefore, autoethnography inherently yields subjective findings, and potential role conflicts remain because the researcher is both the producer of the research material and the one who analyses and reflects upon it (Karra & Phillips, 2008).

Context and research material of the study

Context is a central focus in ethnography because it is instrumental in the construction of meaning (Hansen, 2006). The context of the current paper is the Child and Family Services Change Programme (LAPE) 2016–2019, which aims to deliver child and family-oriented, cost-effective and coordinated child and family services through the renewal of a culture of activity. In practice, LAPE coordinates

child and family services through public, private and third-sector partnerships in the Finnish city of Ulvila. The purpose of the LAPE programme is to strengthen child and family services and focus on preventive services and early support. The LAPE change programme has been vigorously carried forward after 2019, meaning that it was only intended to go until 2019 but was extended past this date.

At the heart of the LAPE change programme is its executive team, which operates in the Satakunta region of Finland and consists of public, private and third-sector actors, employees, managers of child and family services and municipal policymakers. Part of the team is a task force that has the goal of producing a family-centred operating model in Ulvila. The family hub approach aims for the family services in Ulvila to meet the national LAPE work orientations and demands for future child and family services.

The empirical material of the current study consists of ethnographic fieldnotes, semistructured interviews, autoethnographic diary notes and informal conversations with different agents involved in the LAPE programme. The first author conducted three semistructured interviews with the municipal leaders and members of the Ulvila LAPE team and group partners in spring 2020. The focus here is on the interviews with the municipal leaders because they are the key actors in handling the reorganisation of child and family services in Ulvila, Finland.

A part of the empirical material of the current study comprises autoethnographic research notes taken by the first author, who regularly attended the LAPE meetings organised every two months in Ulvila, Finland. The first author attended LAPE meetings nine times in 2018 and 2019. The COVID19 pandemic situation affected the collection of the research material because the LAPE group did not meet at all during the spring of 2020. Also, this extremely special pandemic situation has changed the processes of decision making in municipalities, and new forms of democratic decision making have evolved because of this.

Analysis

Our analysis began with a close reading of the field notes created by the first author. The notes highlighted moments marked by tension and contradictory opinions between different parties during the executive team meetings of the LAPE group. Through collective reflection and an intensive exchange of thoughts between the first, second and third authors (Gutzan & Tuckermann, 2019), the three aspects of everyday work of CSSPs were reflexively further developed. The final phase involved deeper reflection and exchange of thoughts between the three authors during the writing stage,

focusing on precise examples and clarifying the definitions of CSSP through the lens of everyday ethics.

Three complementary aspects of 'doing good' in the everyday work of cross-sectoral social partnership: he LAPE case

Selection of the partners based on their social capital

The first aspect captures the importance of the process of the selection of partners and how this relates to the 'randomness' of selecting the partners for the executive team of the programme. Social capital is often associated with social networks, trust and norms that act as facilitators of cooperation between members, with utilisation of resources and with coordination of activities.

The ability to cope is first influenced by the 'invisible' criteria on which the partners should be selected, as the following interview extract and two autoethnographic diary notes illustrate:

> Those who are invited must have the motivation to come and the motivation to go by invitation. Pretty much, if we start thinking about some hobby groups, then they do them in addition to their own work and more. That's how they get involved then and what resources they have. (Interview 1)

> Members were selected for the group, who, however, were unable to attend the meetings because of their other work duties. This could have been avoided by telling each member at the outset why his or her participation was important and selecting an alternate if the full member was absent. Take, for example, social services or counselling services. If the member in question could be represented even though the social services were absent from the meeting, this could help, but there has not been anyone with sufficient expertise in that aspect of the sector in question. (Researcher Diary A).

As the following autoethnographic note shows, it seems the process selecting the group members was entwined with the aspect of commitment in working towards a joint goal in complex ways:

> As a researcher, I had a feeling from the beginning that not all the members of the working group understood why they were involved in this working group and what the purpose of this working group was. As a researcher, I found that more attention

should have been paid to the selection of the members of the working group. (Researcher Diary A)

The selection based on the members' social abilities or getting along with each other seemed not to be enough. In the following diary note, the researcher describes how the lack of substantial expertise led to confusing situations in which the group could not solve the problems at hand because they did not have internal knowledge of the everyday practices of the specific field, such as early childhood education:

I found that there was a lack of key people in the working group whose participation would have been paramount. An example of this is the lack of technical expertise in the LAPE working group. As a researcher, I also wondered whether the representation of early childhood education in meetings was sufficient when early childhood education was represented by the head of early childhood education, who, however, I thought was primarily a representative of management. As a researcher, I wondered, however, whether I would have liked to have involved, for example, the head of a kindergarten in the field of early childhood education, who would have had more information directly about the practice. I don't know, but I was left to think about that. (Researcher Diary A)

When working in a cross-sectoral group, the interaction skills of members from different sectors have an impact on building a partnership, as captured in the following autoethnographic note:

The personal verbal skills of members play a significant role in building intersectoral partnerships because partnerships are often built in working groups where partners from other sectors receive adequate information about their partners' activities through active interaction. I think it would be sensible to select people for the work groups whose interaction skills, presentation skills and listening skills are suitable for working in a work group. (Researcher Diary A)

We have had internal LAPE work, it has been good, but we have had a bit of a break, but we have been the same and no new openings. We have had the things we have discussed, and progress has been made. Then, there are things that are left to pull on... (Interview 2)

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Even though we are in Finland, we speak such a different language that it is not possible to reach the common goal or idea or the support of families. (Interview 1)

As a researcher, I found that in the working group, the partners have not been on an equal footing with each other from the beginning, but the role of the public sector has been emphasised in relation to the other actors. In other words, other partners have played the role of underdog. This has certainly been reflected in the perceived relevance of the working group. (Researcher Diary A)

The discussions between the public side of the room took the floor to representatives of the other sectors. As a researcher, I found that the distribution of speeches was not equal between the different sectors. Often, the public side spent the most time speaking. I sometimes found frustration that the representatives of the third sector would have liked more speaking time. (Researcher Diary A)

The discussions in the meetings were often jumping from topic to topic. (Researcher Diary A)

I found the discussions to be often so-called. I feel this way, and these thoughts and opinions were not based on the researched information. As a researcher, I was left thinking that there should have been more facts behind the ideas. (Researcher Diary A)

Building partnerships is influenced by how partners have the ability to get along with each other and how trust is built between different sectors. Partnerships build more naturally in a working group when the members of the working group already know each other, as the following empirical extracts illustrate:

We have a social problem as a whole. For us, it is unacceptably bad and light it communication. For example, we are now beginning to replace the work of our social services ourselves. That is, we are now caring for such services ourselves and are not helped. Good results are obtained when the work is done by us, but whose bread do we then end up eating? That's right. Cooperation with social services has not worked. (Interview 2)

As a researcher, I found that there was always a friendly and warm atmosphere when the working groups met. During the first meetings, the members of the

working group got to know each other, and the atmosphere at each meeting was appreciative of the other members. In the working group, he dared to present his own thoughts and thoughts, which, as a researcher, I thought was about openness. (Researcher Diary A)

I noticed that some of the members of the working group were already familiar with each other and some of the guests, but the first meetings of the working group went well and gave the members time to introduce themselves. Everyone heard why each member had been selected for the working group and what sector was represented in the working group. As a researcher, I thought that this good introductory presentation certainly created an open atmosphere, at least in part. In addition, it must have been important that some members had already cooperated with each other in the past. (Researcher Diary A)

That's why it's just terribly important that people know each other. Although, in principle, things should not be personalised and policies should be aligned and agreed upon, the familiarity of being able to contact such a person is always an advantage. (Interview 1)

The ability to get along with each other was affected by the heterogeneity of the partners. If the values and practices of the partners were very different, then it may have been difficult to find common values and create strategies and visions. Heterogeneity can promote and enrich social relations between different sectors and their ability to cope with each other, as described below:

Members representing the public, private or third sector were selected for the working group. The set was marked by strong heterogeneity, which meant that the members of the working group represented very different sectors and actors. (Researcher Diary A)

The different operating cultures of the public, private and third sectors have also brought challenges. The meetings have shown that the public side has no idea what services the third sector produces and provides. An example of this is the parish, which offers a wide range of services, but the provision of services is not known in the municipalities. In other words, they do not know how to use the services because there is no information about them. As a researcher, at a meeting, I found that communication is a problem between sectors. As a researcher, I found out that

municipalities enter into partnership agreements with actors in the third sector, but in spite of this, the service package does not remain open to the parties to the agreement. (Researcher Diary A)

Trust does not automatically arise between different sectors. It is not self-evident that at the same table, trust would arise between representatives from different sectors. Nor can trust be defined from what is illustrated above: it must be built through reciprocity. Creating relationships of trust is a key element of social capital.

'Doing good' by leading well cross-sectoral social partnerships

The ability of partners to get along with each other can be affected by leadership. Leadership guides partners to actively collaborate and maintain social relationships and networks. If leadership is weak, partnerships cannot be developed. With weak leadership, partners cannot find their place in the partnership and social network, as illustrated in the following examples:

As a researcher, I had a feeling from the beginning that not all members of the working group understood why they were involved in this working group and what the purpose of this working group was. (Autoethnographic diary note)

If it (the partnership) is always the responsibility of one, then it is reflected in the way that others perceive it in what our presence means here. That strength comes from engaging people in a way where they feel it's important to be involved. (Interview 1)

As captured in the interview extract above, engaging people emotionally with the group's goal is one of the purposes of leading CSSPs. Based on their backgrounds and past life experiences, all the members of the group have different interpretations of what the meaning of the group is, but despite of this, by leading well, it is possible to join people from different backgrounds to work ethically and with a strong motivation towards a common goal.

Somehow, I see that the locomotive and engine in a certain way should act as the biggest. But that, too, could do just that, that the locomotive would change and that the presidency would change. This was such a good idea for me that I bought into it right away. And think beforehand about the themes that will be covered. (Interview 1)

Collective commitment to a meaningful end result, guided by the nominated leader of the group, could be viewed as a valuable part of constructing cross-sectoral partnerships socially, as the following autoethnographic diary note shows:

> There were plenty of absences from the meetings right from the start. I noticed that some of the members were very enthusiastic and committed to the work of the working group from the very beginning, but some were not committed at all. As a researcher, I think that one measure of commitment is at least the number of absences. (Researcher Diary A)

The below autoethnographic diary note captures one of the main problems in constructing CSSP in an ethical way, namely the common goal of work. At the everyday level, this is perhaps a too obvious aspect of work and, therefore, is not verbalised clearly.

> The problem with the LAPE working group from the beginning has been that the working group's work has lacked a common goal and vision. I found that it has been difficult for the members of the working group to understand what the LAPE working group is aiming for with its activities and meetings and what the core of the working group's activities is. Although the change agents were in the first few meetings and were directing the activities, after that, it was difficult for the working group to find the so-called red thread. (Researcher Diary A)

> A statement from a member of the LAPE working group at the meeting was that 'Now, for the first time, I was really inspired by what is being planned here'. As a researcher, I concluded from this statement that this sentence was a good indication that the work of the LAPE working group has not been very engaging and inspiring for other partners. (Researcher Diary A)

> I found that leading the LAPE working group has been the director of education, supported by the head of early childhood education. As a researcher, I found that this has been a bit of a challenging pattern, however, because the director of education has not had the time to take the activity forward from his work load, and the head of early childhood education may not have found his own place in the leadership pattern. (Researcher Diary A)

The following diary note brings forth the meaningfulness of preparation for the meetings and the problems the lack of preparing can bring about:

> The difficulties in leadership have also been reflected in the activities of the LAPE working group so that convening meetings and preparing meetings in advance has been rather incomplete. (Researcher Diary A)

> The working group has had a clear arrangement that members of the group are participants who will share their views and ideas, but the management operations have always been on the public side. So as a researcher, I have thought many times that management could have been more decentralised. (Researcher Diary A)

As the following diary note captures, the equal and fair division of chairing as an everyday practice is a valuable aspect of leading the meetings:

> The members of the working group have not been equal to each other and, therefore, the different sectors are not equal. Could the meetings have been divided in such a way that they would always have been chaired by one of the members and not by one or two people? This would have been able to generate new ideas and thoughts in a more innovative way. I have discussed the issue as a researcher. (Researcher Diary A)

Because of weak leadership, partners were not able to see the importance of the activity as important or relevant, which affects commitment. The partners did not see the point in committing to joint action, and the partnership process remained on shaky footing, as the following two interview extracts capture:

> LAPE work has been around for a while. When this reform has even flown back here. It has clearly caused problems for this. (Interview 2)

> We don't really know what we're aiming for. (Interview 2)

> Then, the challenge for a partnership can be to have certain practices of its own and, on the other hand, some facilities that have been acquired for where to operate do want to have meetings but don't want anyone to come anymore. (Interview 1)

Maybe we also have this presidency problem here…so it's our presidency of education that the presidency and then that content has always been left to me. So it's a bit fragmented and broken. (Interview 1)

To conclude the first part of our analysis, the final interview extract above illustrates the main thing in leading CSSPs—the ability to see the coherent whole amidst the bits and pieces. It is among the hands of leadership to see the big picture and also reflect on the different views of the partners of CSSPs.

Creating interpersonal and bodily open atmosphere between the partners

The third aspect refers to the importance of creating a constructive, reliable and bodily sensitive atmosphere within the social situations of the cross-sectoral partnership. When building partnerships between public, private and third-sector partnerships, an atmosphere conducive to interaction can be created in the working group in many different ways.

A proper size that felt good for everyone seemed to be an important aspect in creating an open and bodily sensitive atmosphere in the group, as the following quote illustrates:

This would need to be thought about in some way and clarified if it is too big a group and what. (Interview 1)

On the other hand, meeting face-to-face was considered a meaningful aspect in creating a sense of 'us' within the group. However, there were some members who did not attend the meetings, and this caused problems in the formation of the partnerships, too, as the following diary note states:

The absence of some of the members in the meetings gradually began to contribute to the irrelevance of the LAPE working group. We discussed things on a general level among a few people because of the absence of the others, and it clearly caused feelings of frustration among those who were physically present. (Autoethnographic diary note)

Hence, partnership processes could not be built if one of the partners was absent often from the joint meetings. Luckily, this issue could be solved by always having the same number of participants physically present in the meetings and at the appointments. If the actual representative was unable to attend, then his deputy would come. Thus, each partner would always be equal when discussing and deciding things.

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The dates of the working group meetings, which are either in the morning or in the afternoon in the middle of the working day, clearly posed challenges, meaning that all the members of the working group were never able to participate at the same time. Thus, absenteeism immediately caused an unequal situation in the working group, with some sectors and actors not being fully represented at the meetings. There was always someone away from the meeting, and there was no deputy system in place. A deputy would have been a good thing because then there would have been sufficient representation at every meeting. (Researcher Diary B).

As a researcher, I found that the atmosphere was that not everyone understood why they were involved in the working group. In the beginning, it was somehow confusing what the purpose and meaning of the working group was, and it didn't really shine much at any point. (Researcher Diary A).

Having the courage to separate oneself from old ways of thinking and practices was found to help create an innovative and constructive atmosphere, while also advancing the building of partnerships, as in the following:

… Is therefore not ready to come out of it on his own familiar and safe and does not dare to face something new with courage. (Interview 1)

In most of the meetings, the researcher attended, the researcher felt the atmosphere was generally open and relaxed. Most of all, what created this kind of atmosphere was derived of trust and a sense of being that allowed the members to say whatever was on their minds, as the following diary notes capture:

I found that there was often an open discussion atmosphere in the working group, yet, the discussions were marked by excessive openness. (Researcher Diary A)

The working group dared to bring out their own thoughts and thoughts, which, as a researcher, I thought was about openness. (Researcher Diary A)

It is essential to have an interaction that promotes the types of partnerships where the partners have sufficient expertise; this is reflected in the interactions between the partners. In interaction situations, expertise emerges, and experiential knowledge can be transferred from partners to others. On the other hand, by listening to other experts, it is possible to learn something new and learn to understand things from different perspectives, as captured in the following interview extract:

Well, I'm just wondering how I'm stuck in the formulas in a certain way, that if the third sector starts throwing in some wild thoughts, then how hard it is to give up one's own policies and starting points and then kind of give up…Or do you always go to see for yourself if this is possible under all laws and regulations...and are afraid that someone else will have a reason to complain. (Interview 1)

Embodied interconnection in social situations between the partners materialised first and foremost in the executive team meetings. There seemed to be a lot of work that needed to be done regarding respecting each other's thinking and understanding the value of the *partners* as such. When partners met at the same table to decide things, corporeality impacted building partnerships. Body language communicates to other partners how important things are, and embodied interconnectedness builds on fine-grained actions on the everyday level, as the following diary note illustrates:

However, XX always remembered beautifully to thank the members of the working group for coming to the meeting, despite their own busyness. As a researcher, I found that the thanks created a warm atmosphere and positivity for the working group. The members of the working group had obvious smiles and joy. (Researcher Diary B)

Also, signs of negative feelings, such as frustration or boredom, were shown through bodily gestures, as the following autoethnographic diary note captures:

There were feelings of frustration among the members of the working group that I interpreted as obvious gestures. Frustration was often caused by the aimlessness of the meeting. As a researcher, I often could not understand why the working group was meeting today and what the purpose of this meeting was. (Researcher Diary B)

Sometimes, acting ethically on the everyday level of the partnerships was materialised in whom was allowed to speak and who was not, as captured in the following autoethnographic diary note:

The right to speak was not equally distributed among the partners. When the speeches were then distributed, there was often no clear line as to what was to be discussed here and now, which was caused by the speeches easily spilling over from one topic to another. I noticed how long speeches caused feelings of frustration in other members of the working group because they sighed loudly in

the meetings or seemed to focus on their mobile phones more than on the words of someone speaking. As a researcher, I thought that the working group could have had clear tacit rules for short and concise speeches. (Researcher Diary B)

To conclude, the embodied nuances of physical interaction in the meetings between the members of the CSSP were 'hidden' but highly relevant in developing the partnership further.

Discussion and conclusion

We began the current study by questioning the everyday nature of the CSSP in an ethnographic case study of the LAPE programme in Ulvila, Finland. We showed how existing debates about CSSP tend to place on the side line the everyday ethics of work in these partnerships. Public–private and third-sector partnerships were built in these LAPE working group meetings.

Based on the analysis, we can identify three complementary overlapping aspects through which the CSSP was negotiated at the everyday level and that, hence, affected its ethicality: 1) selection of the partners based on their social capital; 2) 'doing good' by leading good cross-sectoral partnerships; and 3) creating interpersonal and embodied atmosphere between the partners.

Our study shows that when working in a CSSP, the criteria of selecting the members of the partnership, the abilities to lead the partnership and the embodied interaction skills of its members from different sectors all impact building a partnership and creating a trustful atmosphere within its members. Public–private and third-sector partnerships are built in a working group when the partners have the ability to get along with each other and the opportunity to build a confidential pattern of cooperation for the cross-sectoral partnership. The heterogeneity of partners from different sectors proved to be a valuable factor in fostering the ethicality of the partnership at the everyday level. More specifically, heterogeneity seemed to promote and enrich the relationship between its members from different sectors and the ability to get along with each other. Our study also found that partnerships are built more naturally in a working group when the members of the working group are familiar with each other. On the other hand, conflicting values and uncaring behaviours seemed to cause problems in finding common values in the working group to create common strategies and visions.

Our results show how the leadership of the working group was clearly linked to the partners' ability to get along with each other. Partnerships between different sectors was promoted in the working group through good and ethically consistent leadership. With poor leadership, the partnerships seemed to remain fragile and weak. Cooperation and social relations between the partners were maintained in the working group through the ethical day-to-day actions of leadership.

With weak leadership, the partners did not find their place in the partnership and social network, as the research results showed. Our results showed that as a result of weak leadership, the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships was not seen as important or relevant. Our study found that through weak leadership, partners do not see the importance of collaborating across sectoral boundaries, and the partnership process in the working group remained shaky.

Our study shows that when working in a team, body language and fine-grained nuances of bodily gestures and actions can communicate to other partners how important things are. Partnerships may not be built if the body language does not support the conditions of the partnership. In a workgroup, body language can be positive or negative. Partnerships are difficult to build across sectoral boundaries if there is often a key person absent from group. In building working partnerships across sectors, it would be relevant for the working group to have the same number of people present at meetings and appointments. If an actual member of the working group is prevented from attending, he or she would be replaced by an alternate. Thus, each partner would always be equal when discussing and deciding things.

Our study has given insights into the subtle characteristics of the everyday work of CSSPs. Through the use of ethnographic research material and autoethnographic reflections, our study has highlighted the meaningfulness of the embodied, fine-grained details of interactions between the members within these partnerships, which deserve to be voiced, as well. Therefore, the current study has aimed to gain a much more nuanced understanding of the ethical working practices and partly 'hidden' actions of CSSPs than has been managed to date to develop all types of partnerships, help their members and improve their welfare.

When building partnerships between public, private and third-sector partnerships, an atmosphere conducive to interaction can be created in the working group in many different ways. Learning from old ways of thinking and practices helps to create an innovative and constructive atmosphere while promoting the building of partnerships.

Several studies have acknowledged the salient role of collaboration in the work of CSSPs in particular (Vurro et al., 2010; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Our findings add nuance and complexity to these studies by empirically showing how the work of CSSPs is negotiated on an everyday level between the different parties and how the concept of 'embodied ethics' is entwined in this process. We have illustrated how the fine-grained, day-to-day subtleties in interaction play a significant role in CSSPs, an aspect which we consider central when applying our ideas to broader organisational contexts. In addition, the present study makes the methodological contribution of

describing how ethnography can be used as a valuable tool in the pursuit of sustainable futures for organisations and communities.

Based on our study, some research ideas for the future have been generated. First, the interrelations between the bodily actions and cross-sectoral partnerships would be interesting to explore in more detail. More research is needed on the embodiment of cross-sectoral partnerships and their attachments to the sensory and affective sides. As Ropo and Sauer (2008, p. 469) write, in the traditional view of organisation studies, the people 'are seen as "human resources", as something abstracted from their senses, experiences, and gender', but without more empirical research, it is impossible to elaborate on the meanings and dimensions of embodiment of the partnerships and other working communities any deeper.

In the broadest sense, our study encourages organisations and managers to understand the concept of CSSPs in a different way. Even though organisations already enable rich social interactions and collaboration via verbal communication, the 'hidden' offstage dynamics of these partnerships play a significant role in conveying hidden, subconscious or even repressed experiences. Even small teams, entrepreneurs, researchers and knowledge-intensive professionals can make use of this finding: a working process involves appreciation for even the most seemingly insignificant ideas by paying attention to the group members' day-to-day behaviour and embodied subtleties to reach more ethical working communities.

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