Networks – Nets that Work

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Research – what works

- In contrast to hierarchies and markets, networks organise through cooperative means (Thompson) based on trust.
- Seeley Brown and Duguid (2001) suggests that shared practice is the basis on which knowledge is developed in networks.
- Davis (2009) identifies that generating collaborative innovation relies not just on the design conditions (governance, social embeddedness) but on the development of relationships over time facilitated by appropriate processes.
Why they fail

• Miles and Snow (1992) predict that network organisations fail due to managerial mistakes in initial design or in ongoing management particularly the impact of over-expectation of cooperation (limiting the creativity of the parts of the network); resorting to command mechanisms of management; predicking some network members over others; constraining the operating independence of the network members.

• Difference in knowledge creation and use create tensions

• The different paces of readiness for release from central control

• Trust is easily destroyed in networks – as lack of connection breaks relationships
Top Tips (1)

• Articulate shared purpose – as folk seek central control, help generate partnerships through shared vision, to be negotiated in turn with donors

• Develop relationships and trust - design the opportunity for shared practice and shared experience; have frank discussion about resources, IP, priorities

• Create a network architecture – goals, boundaries, branding etc

• Watch how power flows and ensure access to informal and formal power

(Lessons from the Evolution of the Citizenship DRC 2008)
Top tips (2)

- Pay attention to the parts and the whole.
- Develop purpose, and guiding principles and review those every time you meet.
- Make sure that you have feedback skills embedded across the network.
- Be clear about boundaries (what’s in and out and what joining in and joining up look like).
- Review, evaluate, generate feedback data about the network.
How you see the world together

FLEA SNOBBERY

I can't tell how long you'll be here. You clearly crossed the border irregularly, but they still can't decide whether to press charges for illegal immigration or cattle smuggling.

Andrés Diplotti

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