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the Association for Management Education and
Development**





Guest Editors: Rosemary Cairns and Bob MacKenzie

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“Yes, and ...” reflections on Open Source Thinking

Rosemary Cairns and Bob MacKenzie



‘Openness isn’t the end; it’s the beginning!’

Margaret Heffernan, 2012

Keywords:

yes, and ... conversations, open source thinking, virtual facilitation skills, ownership of ideas, critical thinking



Photograph of Rosemary by Sidney Kwiram

Introduction

Margaret Heffernan’s maxim neatly sums up our journey thus far through ‘open source thinking’. Arriving at publication time, we realise that we’ve only scratched the surface of this fascinating and important topic. So we’re left with more questions than answers. Nevertheless, we’re beginning to glimpse intriguing possibilities. Since we wrote the call for papers last year, we have been inspired not only by a brilliant set of articles in response, but also by a rippling flow of ‘yes, and ...’ conversations and debates among ourselves and with others.

The title of this edition of e-Organisations and People (e-O&P) came to us after watching a TED talk given by Patrick Finn of the University of Calgary, in which he postulates the need to reorient university learning towards ‘loving communication’ and ‘open source thinking’ (Finn 2012). In a critique of prevailing university culture, Patrick argues passionately for ‘an open and dynamic set of thought’, and heralds a space and time where ‘something’s getting bigger’. Our subsequent exchanges have generated such questions as: How might open source thinking (OST) be manifest? How can such a beguiling process be facilitated? What brave new world might it lead to? Is there a ‘but’ in ‘yes, and ...’ thinking? And who owns a ‘wise crowd’s’ thinking?

In our original invitation to contributors, we wondered aloud if we were in the midst of a major paradigm shift in terms of how information is owned, used, and managed. Were we moving from a proprietary model, in which someone owns information and extracts profit and personal benefit from that ownership, to a generative model, in which information and other precious resources could be used openly, for widespread benefit, while still giving credit to the ‘owner’?

Initially, we were thinking about 'open source software', 'the internet', 'Wikipedia', 'Wikimedia', 'Creative Commons', 'social media', the Open University, and massive open online (university) courses (MOOCs) that are freely available online, to name but a few examples. Such developments enable us to create and share what we know, while acknowledging the contribution of the 'original' thinker(s). We soon realised, however, that these examples formed only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface, 'open source thinking' may be changing profoundly our socially constructed 'reality' – our 'social architecture'.



Reflections on ripples, by Rosemary Cairns

At this stage of our journey through 'open source thinking', we're led to surmise that as this shift is percolating inwards, upwards and outwards, it is changing many of our systems in ways that are only slowly becoming evident. We hadn't seen it fully before, because we had no commonly agreed name for such a profound shift that has been occurring beneath the radar.

Two fascinating questions in particular have arisen for us, as we worked on this issue in a swirl of 'yes, and ...' conversations. One is how to identify the many ways in which open source thinking is reshaping our social and corporate relationships at the same time as our environment is becoming more virtual, and correspondingly less face-to-face. The other concerns the nature and role of 'critical thinking' and 'competition' in an era of 'yes, and ...' conversations. Is there still a place for critical thinking when one uses a 'generative' thinking style that builds on the contributions of others? When corporations are beginning to reach far beyond their 'boundaries', even to competitors, to crowd source new ideas (a fascinating process described in their article by Julia Goga-Cooke and her colleagues), what implications does this have for the market economy?

As guest editors, we've enjoyed many rich conversations around these two questions, for example over lunch with Martin Gilbraith in London in early February. We are now looking forward to similarly enriching and mind-stretching conversations during our post-publication workshop in Brighton over 2 and 3 August ([click here for more details](#)).

As Marjorie Kelly notes, once we have a name for a phenomenon (if the name is a useful one) we can then see more clearly how that phenomenon is present all around us (Kelly 2012). Thus the value of naming the change – of calling this process 'open source thinking' – is clear. Just as Marjorie's phrases '*extractive ownership*' and '*generative ownership*' encapsulate two very different ways of looking at the rights, obligations and nature of ownership, the terms '*proprietary thinking*' and '*open source thinking*' offer possibilities for making sense of a myriad of changes occurring in our world. And as Ken Banks suggests, 'open source thinking' is not just an approach to generating innovative ideas and practices, it also has the capacity to change power relationships radically. And this potential gives rise to both opportunities and dangers, depending on one's viewpoint.



Convergence into open space, by Rosemary Cairns

The impact of OST: mobile banking and international aid

Think of mobile money, which is creating such dramatic changes in Africa. When mobile banking first developed in Kenya, making it possible for people to use mobile phones to send and receive money without having to go physically to a bank, banks were worried. They had invested millions in creating buildings and elaborate systems to manage money. Now, if people could move money easily through their mobile phones, without ever setting foot in a bank or having a bank account, would there still be a need for bank buildings – or for banks at all? However, having seen 'mobile money' at work, banks have been coming round to regard this as an opportunity to expand their business without having to invest in concrete and mortar. At the same time, people are coming to realise how their money can grow the economy in poor rural areas of their country where it had never been practical for banks to set up a branch.

International aid agencies now increasingly use mobile money to distribute aid, which in turn is reinforcing a change in how aid works. There is a shift from *giving goods* to *giving cash*, which allows people to choose which of their needs they wish to meet, and how they will do so. Often, they choose to repay debt to local traders, which resuscitates regional economies in drought- or conflict-affected areas of the world. Recently some donors have been giving directly to recipients, thus obviating the role of international aid agencies as

middle men. And, as Steve Perry explains lucidly in his insightful article about strategic planning in resource-rich Moçambique, development brings in many more players, including those with a nose for commercial gain, as well as many more ideas about what to do. Hence international agencies being forced to re-evaluate what it is they do that offers value, which is primarily in the area of sharing and offering skills and knowledge. This gives rise to the possibility of a much more equal relationship between donor and recipient, based on neighbour-to-neighbour principles, rather than on those of expert-to-novice. Since this in turn requires institutional change, 'open source thinking' thus becomes – in Ken Banks' vivid phrase – a vehicle for 'disruptive development'.

OST's impact on other social institutions

Other key social institutions are struggling with similar existential questions. When you can learn online from a university rather than paying thousands of dollars or pounds – or similarly large amounts of other currencies - for the privilege of attending the physical institution itself, what does that mean for universities, degrees, and the process of learning? If your 'class' is made up of people located all around the world who



Eroding age-old structures, by Rosemary Cairns

you may never meet, who come from dramatically different backgrounds and cultures, how does that change the discussions in your virtual 'classroom'? What should universities invest in, if much of their growing student body – and a growing number of their faculty - will rarely if ever set foot in physical lecture theatres, seminar rooms, libraries or campuses?

In corporate or organisational terms, how does one structure a virtual organisation or team when its members come from all around the globe and may never meet in person? How does one make access to such a team or organisation as equal as possible when participants may speak a variety of languages and hail from many cultures? And what does it mean for the notion of 'work' if one never goes to a company office to earn one's living, but instead operates from one's home or on the road?

The shifting role of the internet

If the internet provides a principal means by which 'open source thinking' can proliferate around the world, will it shift from being a 'toll road' requiring payment for access, towards becoming a universal open highway to which everyone, no matter what their resources or geographic location, should have free access? If so, how do we achieve this goal? And if we succeed in this, how do we deal with those who use the internet for destructive purposes – whether individually, to bully targeted others, or societally, as when governments 'turn off the switch' through censorship and access control?

Implications of OST for facilitators

Facilitators – who have expertise in planning and facilitating meetings – see both opportunity and challenge in these developments. Facilitators are used to working with ‘yes, and ...’ approaches to problem solving, and much of their work encourages participants to share and build on a range of ideas. Movements such as Occupy, while protesting against economic inequality, also spend a great deal of time training ordinary people in how to facilitate meetings and to ensure that every voice is heard.

Open source thinking, with ‘yes, and ...’ approaches, is solving practical problems, such as designing buildings with widespread public involvement, in ways that also strengthen local democracy. As Tim Merry notes, participatory democracy is reinforced one project at a time as citizens and developers both learn that well-designed public processes can reflect the needs and wishes of the majority, whilst taking care to avoid disadvantaging minorities unduly.

Thus facilitators may be, in many ways, uniquely equipped to work with open source thinking, and to support others in doing so. However, as the worlds of work and ideas increasingly inhabit virtual space, facilitators are finding that they must learn new ways to ply their trade by adding to their existing repertoire. How does one create, in virtual space, the psychic infrastructure that underpins the face-to-face meetings we’ve been used to? How does one ‘brainstorm’ in virtual space? How does one encourage problem-solving in virtual space? How does one facilitate ‘yes, and ...’ conversations in virtual meetings that bring together people who grew up in many different cultures, with different understandings of how one should behave in public and private, with different feelings about the value of silence and speech, and with different levels of comfort about conflict being expressed publicly? What are the implications of the need to develop virtual facilitation skills?

Some health warnings about OST

As with any other perceived paradigm shift, open source thinking is raising new problems and challenges as well as new opportunities and possibilities. One of those challenges is in identifying ownership of ideas in a ‘yes, and ...’ environment. For example, within higher education, as well as opening up access to unimaginable library resources, internet access has led to both increased instances and detection of plagiarism, by everyone from university students to well-established authors and journalists. International lawyers such as Enrico Bonadio are preoccupied with the inherent conflict between copyright law and freedom of speech as a basic human right, for example in the context of file-sharing (Bonadio 2011). And how does OST affect the hallowed principle and practice of ‘critical thinking’ in universities? As Patrick Finn has written to us in a recent e-mail:

‘I did not add a new section on Critical Thinking - though Rosemary said it might be good to discuss it when we meet in August. There's a rather long explanation that goes with how we go about thinking critically, but I want to make sure that you understand - *I am actually for training in rhetoric, logic and formal analysis - my dispute is with what now passes for critical thinking and is really a degraded - ironically uncritical - version of its more thorough and generous ancestors.*’

(Finn, personal communication 10.2.13; our italics)

What you'll discover in this edition

The articles in this issue explore the processes, manifestations and implications of 'open source thinking'. How does one prepare one's self to engage in OST? How does open source thinking change the nature of our institutions? How does open source thinking affect power relationships? What new, additional facilitation skills must we develop?

In our introduction "*Yes, and ...*" *reflections on Open Source Thinking*, we (**Rosemary Cairns and Bob MacKenzie**) set the context for the articles which follow, and offer a snapshot of the rich and compelling contents of each. We invite you to consider the potential of open source thinking (OST) to make a positive difference in our lives, and we acknowledge that we're only just beginning to understand its implications, especially for facilitators and developers around the world. We're left with more questions than answers, and we're excited about prospects. The agenda raised by contributors will keep us all busy.

Patrick Finn's article *Open Source Thinking: How to Fix Everything from Education to Dinner* is the passionate and beguiling appeal which prompted our decision to invite contributions to this themed anthology. It throws down a challenge to us to re-think our approach to thinking. In effect, Patrick envisages a form of generous and respectful 'loving communication' and 'open source thinking' that harks back to classical times, when rhetoric, logic and analysis inspired the flowering of wonderful ideas in the spirit of co-inquiry, long before that term was coined.

Alone together: walking to Open Source Thinking in the Labyrinth by **Alison Piasecka** offers us a valuable opportunity to open ourselves up to OST, as a prelude to co-creating ideas and understanding from our different disciplines, perspectives and experiences.

Rowena Davis writes in *Creating the conditions for all voices to be heard: strategies for working with differences* about how she uses systems-centred theory (SCT), chaos theory, and the System for Analyzing Verbal Interaction (SAVI) framework to explore and reconcile differences arising from diversity of communication styles, and to encourage people to be open to each other's respective viewpoints.

Engagement 2.0: co-creating connection by **Julia Goga-Cooke, Marzia Arico and Max Mockett** draws on the pioneering work of Lynda Gratton and the Future of Work (FoW) project. They argue that, to be fit for the future, companies need fresh, well developed collaboration networks across traditional boundaries. Harnessing the wisdom of crowds is becoming crucial. The authors illustrate some of the learning they've co-created so far in the process of engaging employees and other stakeholders.

Marjorie Kelly holds out the prospect of a radically different way of doing business in *Journey to a generative economy*. In contrast to outmoded forms of extractive ownership, which are essentially exploitative and ultimately impoverishing, Marjorie identifies an innovative form of generative ownership that brings both economic and social benefit. As an example of the latter, she draws upon the mutually beneficial relationship between Coastal Enterprises Inc and the Maine lobster industry in the USA to make her case.

An inconvenient truth? The destiny of ICT4D rests with those it originally set out to help by **Ken Banks** is yet another eye-opener. Ken's "inconvenient truth" is that Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) is currently attempting inappropriately to fix problems on behalf of local people who

themselves can often understand and solve them much better. He argues that the whole development agenda is shifting, and he predicts a future of “disruptive development” - a major disconnect between what ‘we’ think needs to be done, and what those closest to the problems think needs to be done.

In *Locally-led community development in Africa*, **Steve Perry** tells how, when your work is to help poor and marginalised people improve their livelihood options, realising that the country in which your project is based sits on a treasure trove fundamentally changes the discourse. Steve shares what happened when the NGO CARE opened up its planning process in Moçambique to be as inclusive as possible. His story illustrates how pulling up many more seats around the strategy table also brought in fundamentally new thinking about options.

Tim Merry writes in *Insights from Civic Engagement: co-creating new beginnings and trust* about what he’s learned from leading civic engagement and public consultation processes. He explores the purpose and one of the core principles of authentic engagement – trust, in the context of work carried out in Nova Scotia, Canada. Tim makes it clear that this is not simple work, nor is it for the faint-hearted. He also acknowledges how the act of writing his article has helped him to understand more profoundly a number of important issues.

In *Recognising, respecting and rewarding oddballs*, **Anil Gupta, Marianne Esders** and colleagues describe how the Honey Bee Network in India began to search for novel sources of solutions to fundamental problems of development. This fundamentally shifted their understanding of the development process. Their approach is to look for resources in which poor people are rich and then use this richness as a building block of future development. They see this as the first open innovation platform, and they ask why wealthy donor agencies and so-called participatory development projects have signally ignored these developments. However, they are optimistic that, eventually, such authentic engagement with creative forces in any society will become axiomatic and accepted practice. The article also proposes a theory by which firms can benefit greatly by learning from creative communities through open innovation platforms at four levels: artefactual, analogic or metaphorical, heuristic and gestalt or configuration (Gupta 2012).

Finally, you’ll find the usual section on *book reviews, Invitations and Notices* concerning what’s going on in our networks.

What do you think about OST?

‘Openness isn’t the end; it’s the beginning!’

To keep going the conversations inspired by the articles in this issue of *e-O&P*, we’re rounding off this introductory piece, as we began, with Margaret Heffernan’s (2012) challenge.

We’re keen to hear your views, and we’ve created a virtual space [here](#) for you to engage with us and each other online in the spirit of OST as a prelude to our coming together in person over [2 and 3 August](#) in Brighton.

Acknowledgements

This edition *e-O&P* is another example of the close collaboration that's been growing between AMED and IAF Europe. And it's been co-created through countless 'yes, and ...' conversations, both orally and in writing. As guest editors, we'd like to acknowledge the generous support that we've received from members of both networks. Publication could not have happened without the dedicated, expert and voluntary support of many people. In particular, we'd like to thank all **the authors** who appear in this issue, either for allowing us to re-publish an adapted version of an earlier work, or for writing something afresh on the theme of 'Open Source thinking: possibilities for "yes, and ..." conversations'. **David McAra** is the unsung hero of *e-O&P*, hidden away behind the scenes transforming raw text into aesthetically pleasing forms as he converts articles from Word to pdf, all the while dealing calmly with innumerable editorial and authorial demands upon his time. **Linda Williams** and **Ned Seabrook** of AMED are also constant sources of support behind the scenes. Linda beavers away on our web page www.amed.org.uk; following publication, Ned is a stalwart in disaggregating the online journal into individual pdf articles for those who prefer to read them in this way.

As guest editors, we can confirm that working on quarterly editions on *e-O&P* affords everyone concerned a uniquely privileged opportunity to be involved in a stimulating and worthwhile project of personal learning and development, as well as providing a valued service to a growing community of practice of developers. A major benefit is that you get to meet and learn with some wonderful people. So we'd like to extend this opportunity to as many of you as possible. If you'd like to explore this invitation further, please [click here](#). We'd love to hear from you.

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Open Source Thinking

How to fix everything from education to dinner

Patrick Finn



My proposal for how a simple change in our universities could reap huge benefits in our lives may seem audacious, especially when noted experts propose radical restructuring.

Keywords

creativity, innovation, communication, critical thinking, universities, education, teaching, learning, open access, performance

Restoring our faith in university teaching and learning

In his famous TED Talk, the internationally renowned authority on education Sir Ken Robinson argues that schools kill creativity http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html

His video has elevated him into a kind of public intellectual superstardom that would have been hard to imagine before the advent of the World Wide Web. In a follow-up video, he deepens his commitment to educational change by arguing that a complete restructuring, rather than piecemeal reform, is required. http://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution.html

Scholars such as Roger Schank argue that we should move most of education online and have fewer than a half dozen universities in all of the United States.

I believe that while Robinson and Schank make important observations, they go too far in their suggestions. As a result, they miss a simpler and low-cost solution, which could achieve all of their aims while also increasing general well being. Sounds too good to be true? Actually, that's part of the problem.

A problem with critical thinking

Before you've even heard it, you may be dismissing my proposal as being too good to be true. That is because you grew up inside an educational system that taught you to think critically. You begin each thought process from a place of suspicion; we all, in fact, think like this because we are all trained by the same system. As Robinson points out, the Western system of education is now the global system of education. Everywhere around the world, schools follow the same protocols and teach the same set of subjects, tiered in the same way. And behind it all, as a kind of overarching operating system, lies critical thinking.

Critical thinking is more pervasive than Windows or Mac. I have not been able to discover a school or university anywhere that will allow 'educators' into the classroom unless they promise to teach critical thinking. Our scientists, engineers, mathematicians, dancers, doctors, lawyers, philosophers and politicians are all critical thinkers. Critical thinking may be more powerful than language: you can go to an American university and get a degree without using English, but not without critical thinking.

Now consider that our teachers are also trained at university. That means that our primary and secondary teachers are all critical thinkers as well. Everyone, everywhere, regardless of race, creed or colour, is trained to be a critical thinker. Even if someone manages to escape critical thought as a university student, all of their education has been in the realm of critical thinking from the time they began attending school until they entered adulthood.

=Critical thinking teaches us to be suspicious of all incoming information. It leads us to enter the world expecting to disagree, expecting to find problems, expecting not to be able to trust. In effect, it teaches us to treat one another as hostile witnesses in the trial of life. Such a pernicious form of instruction should be abandoned as a primary mode of engagement, just as the medieval practice of training teachers to beat students as part of teaching Latin eventually became obsolete.

A new paradigm?

However, the power of critical thinking has been so deeply embedded in us that it will be nearly impossible to change unless we replace it with something much deeper. And that brings us to the consideration of dinner and our expertise in coming together as guests and hosts, around campfires or cafes or our own dining table at home.

How much easier is it to meet a new person if, upon introduction, we begin from a place of welcome? Creative thinking welcomes the other and begins from a place of love and respect. Only once a relationship is fully engaged would we employ critical thought for a final, evaluative procedure in order to determine outcomes or next steps. Even then, each process should end with a creative summary rather than the destruction, dissection or discrediting of the other's ideas, opinions and arguments.

In the world of performance, we often speak of "yes, and..." thinking. It is a technique that is often used for improvisation. After years of working in groups on various artistic practices, theatrical performers came to realise that it was too difficult to sustain a relationship using the practices we employ in our daily lives. We are simply too harsh to one another to support creative exploration of possible performance outcomes.

By imposing the idea, "yes" I accept what you have said, "and" here is what I have to offer, the entire relationship is changed. This is not as esoteric as it may seem.

Becoming guests in each other's homes

Years ago, the French Anthropologist Marcel Mauss posited an alternative to the market economy. His groundbreaking book *The Gift* reached back to economies that predated the use of currency in order to discuss alternative ways of living together. The strength of his argument came from two sources. Firstly by offering something so different, he allowed us to think more broadly about how we distribute goods. Secondly, he adopted a model that had already been used successfully over a significant amount of time.

Inspired by the scope of his project, I am proposing that we treat each other as if we were about to be guests in each others' homes.

Critical thinking causes us to respond to one another as opponents, adopting a defensive position. Each offering is picked apart to find structural or factual weaknesses, under the supposition that the other is either deliberately or mistakenly attempting to feed us bad information. How differently we act if, instead of taking up the mantle of thought, we hoist the ladle of hospitality.

When we welcome guests into our home, we are focused on behaving well. We can already hear echoes of our parents' voices warning us, before the guests arrived, that we had to be "on our best behaviour." Take a moment and consider what it would be like if our workplaces, community gathering places and political spaces were entered from a place of our best behaviour, rather than with critical mind?

A guest in our home is afforded the "yes, and..." privilege that I and my fellow artists have been using for years to support creative research. Around the world, protocols of hospitality emphasise the importance of treating one's guests with love and respect. Breaches of these protocols are considered to be among the worst offences in the criminal and moral codes of societies everywhere.

In Shakespeare's eponymous play, when the Macbeths kill King Duncan in order to take his crown, their crime is seen as particularly foul because as a guest in their home, he was entitled to expect their protection. We know this because Macbeth laments over it and others comment on it to make sure we are aware of this deep betrayal of human behaviour. Macbeth privileges the taking of power from another over hospitality. While the scope is radically different, that is exactly what critical mind does - it sets us up to seize rhetorical power from others who, through the act of communication, have placed themselves in our hands.

At our table, we hear the stories that each guest shares. Diverging into topics where people become combative is seen as poor manners. Sayings in many languages counsel avoiding discussion of religion and politics in order to promote civility and good digestion. We could shorten these warnings by banishing critical thinking from the table, at which point we could have all topics of conversation available as long as we agree to the "yes, and..." model of exchange as opposed to the adversarial model inherent in critical thought.

If critical thinking has become a global operating system for rational thought, then we will need a global solution to replace it. Merely suggesting that we become creative rather than critical simply will not do. The reason? Critical thinking is the easiest form of thinking we can do. It requires very little to find a weakness in information in order to dismiss things we are predisposed to disagree with and to find reasons to accept positions that are already aligned with what we think. The so-called "confirmation bias" is a well known component of our thinking. Any first year university student can tell you that the easiest path to a successful essay is to find a flaw to exploit in someone else's work. Being creative takes a lot more work.

The sluggishness of paradigm shifts

As the world becomes more engaged with the ideas of innovation and entrepreneurship, we see more clearly how detrimental to the realm of discovery is the world of critical thinking. Indeed, it seems to be the dark force behind the sluggish response to new information that creates new paradigms discussed in Thomas Kuhn's classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Being open to new information requires work on an ongoing basis. Openness is the most difficult path forward.

Over the years I have spent a great deal of time helping people find, develop and engage their creativity. It makes sense. Creativity can act like a magic potion, keeping us nimble in times of extraordinary change. At the same time it is a complex and challenging road to take. Yes, there are small things we can do to help us be more creative, but to really live creatively takes time. A lot of time.

The art of hosting risk-taking

The good news is that we have an easier route to take for the short term. When we want to spark our creative work in the theatre, we use the “yes...and...” model that I mentioned above. In studio settings, we speak of “creating a container” – an environment in which participants feel safe enough in taking the risks that lead to intense human intimacy. Creating that container takes another kind of expertise and even more time. If you would like, you can contact me and I will help you work on that - it would give me great joy to do so.

If, however, you are quite busy and would really rather begin right away, then start by being hospitable. Treat every person you meet as if he or she was a guest in your home. Even when we have guests who we might not have invited ourselves, we treat them with respect and care for all the aspects of their being that psychologists connect to flourishing. We provide warmth, food and safety - in all of the meanings of those terms. Moreover, with certain cultural differences aside, we all have experience in these areas. Sure, there may be some of us who would attack our own guests, but those people are probably not going to be reading an essay like this, so let's regard them as an exception to the rule.

When we meet to work together, we often formalise our attack postures. Politicians set up tables with opposing sides, and little flags that support the structures of critical thinking. How different would these meetings be if we structured them based on the codes of breaking bread, rather than critical thinking? When we debate, we speak of honourable opposition and of opponents. When we eat together, you can only be a guest or a host - and both of those terms carry with them an automatic assumption of warmth and openness.

In the long term, we need to move away from the combative - and intellectually less rigorous - mode of being governed by critical thinking. Instead, we should work to come together creatively using the “yes, and...” model. It will be infinitely more nuanced, infinitely more civil and infinitely more challenging. Just as good dinner parties are warm and welcoming, they are also exhausting, having involved a great deal of planning, preparation and washing-up in the kitchen! Being open with one another requires a great deal of effort. To be creative leaves one slumped in a chair after the others have departed for the evening. So, if we are to live in a more just, more open, more communicative society, we may have to be willing to go to bed on a lot of nights without having the energy to wash the dishes before we turn in.

Falling in love again ... with universities

A final note on why the university is worth fighting for as we make these changes. The university system, while it has lost its way and become an institution that too often sacrifices dreams for criticism, remains the domain of the open idea. As we move more deeply into the information age, the forces of those who have been sent out into the world with the now defunct critical thinking operating system in their brains will be working to turn everything into a competition. As such, they will find new and exciting ways to fight over and own information. That is an inherently bad thing. Only universities with their ancient commitment to freedom

of exploration, speech and ideas can stem the tide against such powerful forces.

Today's professoriate faces one of the greatest challenges in its history. Business and government are calling for greater efficiency and more measurable forms of academic productivity. If we are to counter that misplaced desire with an embracing, loving and open system of thought, we must fall in love with ideas again and stop selling critical thinking.

It shouldn't be that hard. No one wanted it in the first place.

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About the author

Patrick is a performance expert working at the University of Calgary. At one time or another he has worked as a professional musician, writer, designer, programmer and most recently as a university professor. Tying all of these areas together is his interest in the ways in which we work to find, make and share meaning.

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Alone together: walking to Open Source Thinking in the Labyrinth

Alison Piasecka



Opening up

Open Source invites us to generate ideas across disciplines and experiences, and to build knowledge and understanding through collaboration. Think of the many stories about inventions and scientific discoveries which began and accelerated through accidental and apparently unconnected observations. The question is – what kind of approaches build, stimulate different viewpoints and experiences, and look for collaborative answers across and with other people. Taking inspiration from Patrick Finn in approaching ‘thinking’ from a ‘Yes, and..’ rather than a ‘No, but..’, I want to explore how contemplative labyrinth walking can serve as a form of preparation for Open Source Thinking.

Keywords

labyrinth, discipline, walking contemplatively, respectful facilitation,

Opening up

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Setting aside our acquired patterns for learning

As Patrick Finn notes, it’s not easy to set aside our ‘educational training’ in critical analysis. Not only were we all largely taught in schools and colleges from this starting point, but also much of what we value and respect stems from our roots in eighteenth century rationality. And, if we’re honest with ourselves, so much of it is lurking, mostly unseen, as the foundation of a great deal of our reflex style of thinking.

Many of us also have very busy minds, full of facts, chatter and voices that guide us and reproach us; we can feel, as Bruce Springsteen sang, ‘57 channels and nothing on’. With so much activity inside our heads, our default thinking positions have a well-oiled way of thriving and continuing. And if our default thinking positions stem largely from ‘critical analysis’ roots, it can be very tricky to break those habits and find our way into something new.

Making space for newness

The paradox is that newness only enters in when there is space for it. We might imagine that preparing the ground for new ways of thinking involves...a lot of thinking. But that's the trap. It's actually bare ground that we need for newness, and some empty space for it to take root. A gardening analogy springs to mind; no vegetable grower would simply start a new crop of potatoes right on top of an existing crop. It's quite a challenge to create enough space in our minds to allow newness to take root.

Losing our need for individual credit

And an Open Source approach is a challenge to what and how we think. Apart from stepping aside from our rational roots, we also have to step towards collaboration and co-generation. This means that individual credit ceases to be important. The academic world is founded on individual credit- my idea versus yours, my translation versus yours. It isn't difficult to notice how much we are drawn towards acknowledgement of our own efforts and skills. The academic world may have total mastery in that respect, but many of us are not that far behind.

So, how do we create a clearing in our heads and allow ourselves to play with different ways of thinking and experiencing? And how do we relinquish our need for individual artistry and skill on display as opposed to a 'Yes, and' approach which honours all?

Let's start with creating the 'clearing in our minds'

It may be about discipline. I have always resisted the idea of 'discipline', although actually, I am quite a disciplined person with a reasonable sense of priority and required actions. So that's not the kind of discipline I mean. The 'discipline' I mean relates to the original Latin/old French meaning of the word - instruction or knowledge, usually connected to the state of being a 'disciple' or following a teacher. Hitherto, I have rejected the notion of discipline because of the implication of 'follower hood' of an instructor or teacher, although, interestingly, that was what motivated my learning at University. I have always wanted to feel that I am a free spirit, free and unattached, and therefore able to move flexibly between ideas and concepts and to create my own recognised imprint on what I offer as skills.

Without troubling you with my personal psychology, suffice it to say that the last decade has led me to think and feel differently about 'discipline' as I have described it above. I have learnt from and through others that there are tried and tested ways or 'disciplines', handed down through teachers, that begin the process of allowing a 'clearing in the mind' to emerge. And I am beginning to learn to soften into them, rather than resisting and fighting against them. This includes losing an attachment to what 'is mine' as opposed to what I can 'create with others'.

Stillness creates space

While I am not a natural cross-legged meditator, I have come to experience the quality of stillness that such a discipline can support. In that stillness, I have found that strength and courage can grow, developing new experiences and new reflections. But cross-legged doesn't work for me. It may be the naturally active chatter of my mind, it may be that I am responding to a need for movement and physical exertion that I don't consciously understand. Whatever the case, there is no doubt that activity, for me, supports the 'clearing of the mind' process.

So, paradoxically, movement is/can be the key to stillness. And I am not alone. Walking contemplatively, a discipline once taught in pre-mediaeval monastery life, honoured stillness through movement, and was a primary reason for the existence of cloisters in cathedrals. Perhaps because there is no reliance on speech and thus thought and rational processes are quietened, this movement can be a key to creating the 'clearing in our heads'.

The Labyrinth as a way of 'clearing the mind'

'Very seldom do you come upon a space...when you may stop and simply be. Or wonder who, after all, you are.'

Ursula LeGuin 1982



The Edinburgh Labyrinth in George Square Gardens is an exact replica of the 12th century labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral.
Photo: Di Williams

'The Labyrinth is an ancient symbol, a collectively and anonymously fashioned design, shaped and given fuller meaning over time by hundreds of generations. This fails to comply with the modern notion of the individual genius of an artist being unique and free, coming from within and being beholden only to oneself. Indeed, collective, anonymous experience and individual probings clash with one another'

Herman Kern 2000

For me, using the labyrinth has become a natural extension to the contemplative walk. The labyrinth has supported me in 'clearing my mind' and begun the process of allowing newness to enter in. And at the same

time, the sense of being part of a collective and the universal use of such an archetype has helped me to question and reduce my dependence on my construction of myself as an 'individual artist seeking credit'.

The labyrinth is an archetypal pattern, found throughout time and recorded for thousands of years in stone, landscape, wood, vellum and paper. Labyrinth carvings may date back to the Bronze Age, and actual built labyrinths of turf or stone date from the mediaeval period. Humans have created and preserved this structure and shape for thousands of years.

The labyrinth is one path, with no tricks. Requiring no conscious decision other than to follow, it takes us on a journey around and through a shape to a centre and then back out to where we started. The shape, beguiling in its simplicity, soothes and attracts us. It is a vessel that welcomes us, whatever our minds bring to it. It allows us the harmony of movement and quietness, shaped only by the journey to the centre and the return. Many liken it to a mirror that reflects back to us what is present in us when we walk it - but a mirror that often helps us to see it for the first time.

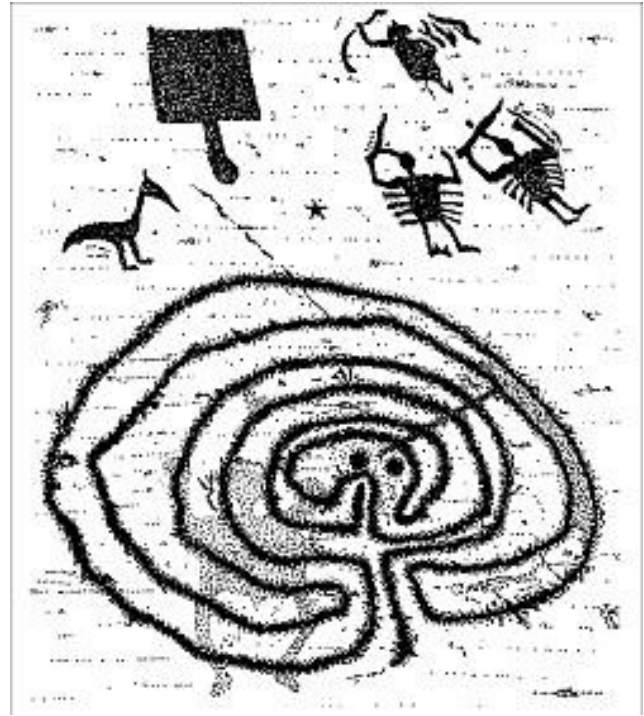
One note of caution: a labyrinth is *not* a maze

Mazes and labyrinths are often confused. Mazes are about confusion, trickery and fun, with blind alleys and traps to confuse the walker. And what of the Minotaur? Interestingly, the Minotaur does appear in the centre of many early Roman era labyrinth patterns, and can be seen in some examples right up to the mediaeval period. From a psychological point of view, it might represent the embracing of the darker side of our minds; from an early Christian perspective, it may echo a borrowed symbol. It's not possible to know definitely what role the Minotaur might have played in the early use of the labyrinth, but it is there sometimes.

What is it like to 'walk the labyrinth'?

Labyrinth walkers speak of feeling a special connection and empathy with others; walking the labyrinth is felt as a sense of being 'alone together'. Many find it very moving to witness others walking the labyrinth. Somehow, the labyrinth's shape and construction holds and protects the walker whilst he or she is living in the moment. In those moments, people frequently experience time slowing down and when they emerge, are amazed at the actual length of time they spent in the labyrinth. Often, people also notice a real sense of a broader connection with humanity at large.

When I first walked the labyrinth, I was so self-conscious about walking the path with others, and thus stepped out so often to let others pass, that I walked out at the end of the labyrinth without ever getting to the centre. I felt so stupid. And then something came to me - how much it mattered to me that I was 'right' and had walked the path 'correctly'. I also remembered a recent comment from someone that I had discounted, and realised that I had pushed away something valuable because of my own judgement about what was right and what was wrong. Since that first walk, both reflections have been powerful influences on my own journey.



Alkborough turf labyrinth, UK, c1700s, photographed by Jeff Saward, (left) and Iron Age petroglyph, Italy, c750BC, drawn by Jeff Saward, (right)

These experiences suggest to me that contemplatively walking a labyrinth can be very supportive in ‘clearing the mind’, especially the rational mind, and thus preparing us for – opening us up to - new thinking and experiences. The physical act of walking promotes a focus on the ‘here and now’ that helps us quieten our rational minds. Walking the path alone and together with others helps to soften connections between people and generate empathy. So, can the labyrinth experience help us to step away from individual credit and towards a co-generative and community approach to learning?

Ownership of the Labyrinth

No individual or organisation can lay claim to inventing the labyrinth. Ancient labyrinths belong to no-one in particular; we have no idea of who built them, and we don’t actually need to know. The universality of the shape and the structure works for us as human beings and the labyrinth’s significance has been retained through time in art, structures and writings. Anonymous spaces, built for communal use, the ancient labyrinths are not attributable to anyone or any creed. Many existing labyrinths were sited in cathedrals and churches, as these were buildings of communal interest and importance. So in ancient and in modern times, many labyrinths have been placed on village ground, on hillsides and in forests, in hospitals and hospices, schools and universities. Modern labyrinths may occasionally suffer from the designer’s need to be recognised for his or her work, but their use is not proscribed or owned by anyone. In itself, the labyrinth stands for human beings ‘alone and together’.

In the last 20 years, the labyrinth movement has grown and developed, particularly supported by Veriditas (<http://www.veriditas.org/>) and other organisations, to offer ways of building community between people and promoting peace and connection.

Respectful facilitation of the individual experience

'I felt peace in my body and mind, which I have not felt for some time now. Thoughts stopped buzzing in my head and it felt like everything slotted into place. My life hasn't changed, but I feel stronger, revived and more able to deal with what I am facing...'

Helen, an Edinburgh Labyrinth walker

Veriditas, the not-for-profit organisation founded by Lauren Artress in the US, has been a significant influence in restoring the labyrinth as a tool for supporting reflection and growth in the modern world. And Veriditas has a clear line on how to introduce the labyrinth to communities. The facilitator creates a quiet climate, holds the quiet climate firm, and supports 'walkers' to find their own pace, feel their own experiences, and value their own reflections. There is no fancy analysis or critical commentary that translates experience away from its origins. There is a clear, strong acceptance and respect for the individual journey. It is a minimalist form of facilitation that maximises the individual experience, generates community, and takes no ownership itself.

Facilitators encourage walkers to use everything that occurs on the labyrinth as metaphor - metaphor that means something to the walker alone, and requires no translation. They also encourage walkers to focus on the physical feelings of the walking experience, as this helps to reduce the rational mind's analytical activity and supports the experiencing of the moment.

In my experience as a developer/facilitator, the placing of such significance on the individual experience is what enables people to feel and be heard. In those non-judgemental and respectful moments, the individual's voice is valued. And, for me, this is the connection between the labyrinth and Open Source. When valuing the individual voice and experience is present in the room, a group of people have the possibility of developing community, and of co-generating new ideas and approaches. So, whilst the labyrinth uses this approach to protect and encourage walkers to engage with their own spiritual selves, such preparatory individual experiences can create those conditions in which Open Source Thinking can emerge within a group.

Contemplative walking and Open Source Thinking

In conclusion, then, it seems to me that contemplative walking using a labyrinth offers a harmonised way of preparing and easing into the principles of Open Source Thinking. Perhaps it could be used exactly as that - a whole-person preparation for Open Source work in a group setting. By creating an enriched and calming personal experience that is shared in a group in real-time, it would build a climate of value and trust that would support Open Source Thinking and working together.

'Life is not a particular place or destination. Life is a path.'

Thich Nhat Hanh

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Photographs:

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Edinburgh labyrinth: Di Williams, 'Labyrinth, landscape of the soul' see above

Italian Iron Age petroglyph: Jeff Saward <http://www.gothicimage.co.uk/>

About the author

Alison has worked in business consultancy, people development and change for 25 years. She lives in France and works in the UK and Europe. She now runs her own business offering personal development workshops and programmes focusing on personal transitions and walking as a form of contemplation, including working with labyrinths. She is a Veriditas-trained labyrinth facilitator. Her passion is supporting people to allow themselves the time and space to inhabit personal change and she is a skilled and empathetic facilitator.

Her website is at www.movingthrutransitions.com and she can be contacted at: alisonpia@live.co.uk

Creating the conditions for all voices to be heard

Strategies for working with differences

Rowena Davis



When I read the invitation to contribute to this edition of e-O&P, I had an instant 'yes!'. These phrases jumped out at me:

...generative ways of allowing diversity to flourish in groups, .. helping groups to move towards agreement and even consensus. ... participatory processes that provide order without imposing control from the top. ... draw upon and honour each and every contribution from group members, presuming that we all have wisdom to contribute.

Can we afford not to draw upon and honour every possible contribution that is latent in collective approaches to building better futures?

For the last decade I've been working with these goals and experimenting with how to do this.

Keywords

systems-centred theory, complexity theory, SAVI, functional sub-grouping, communication climate, integrating differences

Opening up to differences

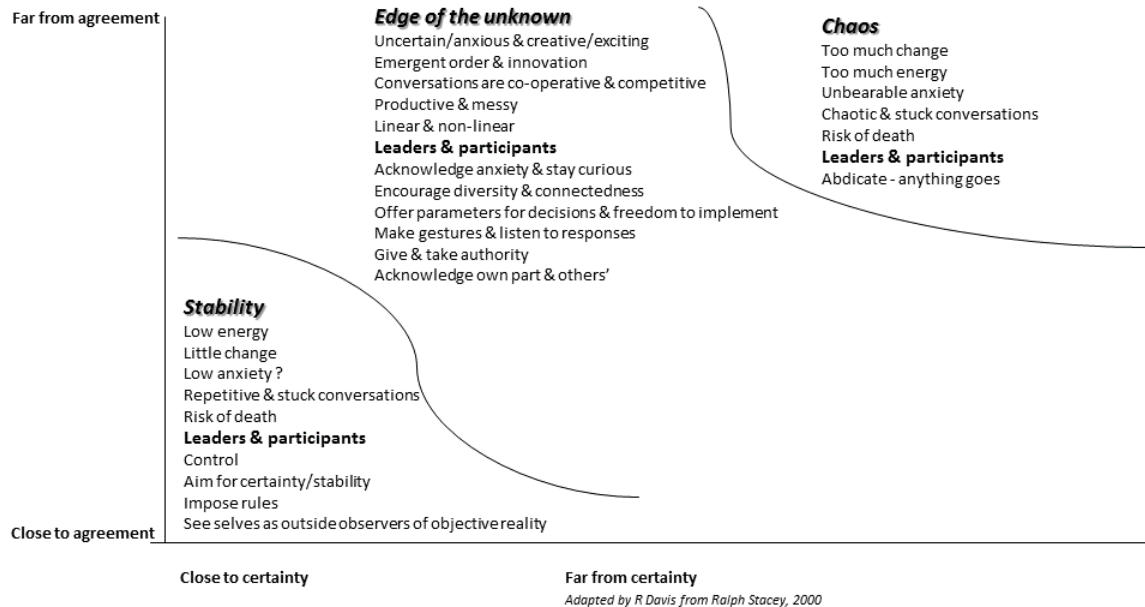
I've been using Systems-Centered[®] Theory (SCT) (Agazarian 1997) and complexity theory (Stacey 2000) as my main maps to make sense of how we co-create dynamics in human systems and how change happens. Both approaches acknowledge the emergent (and often unpredictable) nature of human interaction, and while seeing *some* structure as helpful – and necessary to contain chaos – see *too much* structure as being stifling. Potentially novel solutions emerge in the middle space, which Stacey calls 'the Edge of Chaos' and which Agazarian calls 'the Edge of the Unknown', *if* (and it is a big if) we can listen to our differences and explore the information they contain. This is shown below in the diagram 'Working with differences'.

What is it about differences?

'Living human systems survive, develop and transform by discriminating and integrating differences.'

(Agazarian 1997)

Many approaches, from genetics to encouraging innovation and development, recognise the importance of difference. Difference is central in Systems-Centered theory, which posits that we need differences to develop and transform even though, on the whole, we hate them!



We can't help this. We are hard wired to react to differences in the form of our Flight/Fight response. Neurobiological research shows when our 'low road' emotional brain or amygdala detects danger, it acts within about 10 or 12 milliseconds to trigger a fear response in us.

Joseph LeDoux (2010) gives the example of seeing a long dark object in a wood. Instantly, even before we even think 'A snake!' , our brain begins to respond fearfully to the danger. We are likely to have physiological responses like rapid heartbeat and raised blood pressure, a diminished capacity to feel pain, an exaggerated startle reflex, and production of stress hormones.

If we then take a moment to settle our brains down and check reality, we might discover it is only a stick. This conscious awareness involves another part of the brain – 'the high road' or prefrontal cortex (the area of the brain most responsible for planning and reasoning), which takes more time to come into play. In LeDoux's words '...for you to be consciously aware of the stimulus, it takes 250-300 milliseconds. So, the amygdala is being triggered much, much faster than consciousness is processing.'

Our Flight/Fight response is very useful. As LeDoux says: 'You're better off mistaking a stick for a snake than a snake for a stick' (Hendrix 1997). However, when we are working in organisations or in communities (or indeed relating to family and friends), we often get caught in this automatic response and thus lose our ability to check reality. As a result, we often react to, rather than listen to, differences.

Typically we try to convert, discount or blame/attack those who don't see things the way we do. This has potentially high costs societally. Think of RBS' acquisition of ABN Amro, BP's Deepwater Horizon, subprime lending, X-raying pregnant women long after the link to childhood cancer had been proved (Heffernan 2012) and the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. Robert Francis QC, who chaired the inquiry into the high death rate at Mid Staffordshire, highlighted one of the causes: "It is now clear that some staff did express concern about the standard of care being provided to patients. The tragedy was that they were ignored and worse still others were discouraged from speaking out." (Francis, 2013).

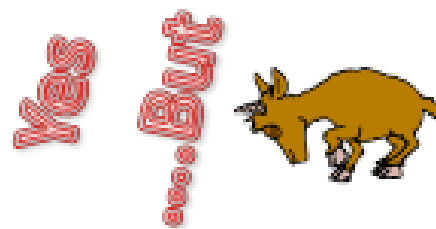
We now know from neuroscience that rather than being set in stone, our brains are plastic (Doidge 2007), and can and do change. The more we use certain behaviours, the more they become engrained which, paradoxically, means they can change. This is Hebb's law, often paraphrased as 'neurons that fire together, wire together' (Hebb 1949).

What helps us open to differences?

So how do we interrupt or at least catch our automatic Flight/Fight response before it gets entrenched and costs us dearly?

From many perspectives – including Systems-Centered Theory, complex responsive processes, dialogue and Positive Psychology – how we talk to each other (and ourselves) is key.

If we view the communication patterns we co-create as verbal behaviours – which like all behaviours get reinforced the more we do them – then (paradoxically again), we also have the potential to change them. Our verbal behaviours create neural pathways in our brains so, instead of being triggered into responding automatically to differences, we can open up to exploring them.



You may recognise these as familiar responses when someone expresses a different view: Yes...but (*'I agree but I think this is would be better'*); discounting (*'That's a stupid idea'*); attacking the other person (*'What! Are you crazy!?'*); trying to convert the other person to your view (*'Don't you think it would be better if we...?'*); or more radically, getting rid of people who hold different views, as happened in the top team at RBS during the run up to acquiring ABN- AMRO. The overall impact is to discourage the speaker from his or her view, to orient to my view (the 'RIGHT' view), and to lose the potentially valuable grit in the oyster that is held within the difference of views.

One of the core Systems-Centered methods – functional sub-grouping – is designed to interrupt these patterns and instead explore the potentially useful information in differences. Functional sub-grouping involves stating clearly when we have a difference, and agreeing to explore one side first, then the other. Systems-Centered Theory also posits that, in a climate of similarity, we will discover just tolerable differences in what initially seemed only similar, and some similarities in what appeared to be only different. This process of exploration is more likely to lead to integration and innovative outcomes. (see the short video Susan Gantt and I produced @

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3A_ZsQgmbAM&feature=player_embedded.)

I use this approach in work contexts with colleagues or clients where we have different ideas of what the issues are or of how to solve problems. If there are just two of us, it means we both try and get into each other's boat. For example, if my colleague thinks we should wait before contacting a client and I think we should talk to them immediately, we will agree which side to explore together first. Then we'll both try to find potential plusses/impacts of going the first route. When we feel we've done enough on the first option, we'll explore the plusses of the second one. Usually, we come to agreement through the process. If we don't, we use other criteria (e.g. whose decision it is). At the very least, we each feel we've had a chance to air our views and to be heard.

Functional sub-grouping is used in many organisational and clinical contexts in the UK, US, Scandinavia, The Netherlands, Japan and in Israel. Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff (2007: 104) use it in Future Search and effective meetings trainings. From their experience it is key to keeping groups and teams working on their tasks.

'[Solomon] Asch showed that as long as each person has an ally, people maintain their independence from [group] pressure. Agazarian went further demonstrating that so long as ...every person has a functional ally – someone who carries the same ideas and/or feelings – a group is more likely to keep working. Members will not distract themselves with side trips into rejecting, rescuing, or scapegoating those who take risks. Our minimal job becomes helping people experience functional differences when stereotypes might prevail.'

The impact of our communication climate

SAVI® (System for Analyzing Verbal Interaction) offers another route to fostering more free-flowing generative conversations. SAVI is a nine box grid (see below) devised by Agazarian and Simon to track and make sense of communication patterns in any context e.g. individuals, couples, teams and groups in personal, organisational and wider social settings. It classifies all verbal behaviours according to whether they are likely to be neutral, to help, or to get in the way of communicating and understanding each other. (SAVI also looks at whether the content is mainly focusing on the Person or the outside world [Topic] <http://www.savicomunications.com/savi.html>).

SAVI helps individuals, couples, teams, and organisations to identify communication patterns, by offering insights into why certain patterns feel generative and satisfying, and why others feel stuck and dissatisfying. It also helps identify strategies for shifting patterns – if desired.

SAVI is not a linear model; it offers ways of thinking about and experimenting with different behaviours and seeing what impact they have in reality. It is also non-judgemental. No behaviours are 'right' or 'wrong'. The only question is whether the behaviours are helping or hindering communication, and whether they support or hinder our goals in the contexts in which we work and live.

SAVI highlights how powerful patterns can be and how our view of people can change, depending on the climate, rather than the people. The same people, with a different communication climate, appear and behave differently!




Recently, in a two day SAVI introductory workshop I was leading in Stockholm, we were all researching the impact of the communication climate on productivity and morale. Four participants were role-playing a discussion while the rest of us observed. The topic was where to take a visiting client to dinner.

I asked the players to use only certain verbal behaviours over four rounds. In *Round 1* they were using Obscuring, Individualizing and Influencing behaviours. These are typical behaviours at the start of a team discussion when we are likely to be in 'Flight' from our task (Wheelan, 2005; Gantt and Agazarian 2007).

In *Round 2*, things got a bit more heated with Fighting, Competing and Influencing behaviours – with lots of Yes-Buts, Interrupting, Opinions and some Attacking and Self-Defence. In this round, one person was also asked to use Finding Facts – Facts and Figures and asking Questions. One player reported at the end of

this Round that he had had a strong impulse to get rid of the Facts and Figures person (this illustrates the scapegoating impulse that is elicited in a 'Fight' climate).



| | | PERSON | | | TOPIC | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|-------|--|--|--|
| | | Personal  | Factual  | Orienting  | | | | |
| AVOIDANCE CONTINGENT APPROACH | | 1 FIGHTING | 2 OBSCURING | 3 COMPETING | | | | |
| | | Attack/Blame Righteous Question Sarcasm Self Attack/Defend Complaint | Mind-Reading Negative or Positive Prediction Gossip Joking Around Thinking Out Loud Social Ritual | Yes-But Discount Leading Question Oughtitude Interrupt | | | | |
| | | 4 INDIVIDUALIZING | 5 FINDING FACTS | 6 INFLUENCING | | | | |
| Personal Information Current Personal Information Past Personal Opinion Explanation Personal Question | Facts & Figures General Information Narrow Question Broad Question | Opinion Proposal Command Social Reinforcement | | | | | | |
| 7 RESONATING | 8 RESPONDING | 9 INTEGRATING | | | | | | |
| Inner Feeling Feeling Question Answer Feeling Question Mirror Inner Experience Affectionate Joke Self Assertion | Answer Question Clarify Own Answer (with data) Paraphrase Summarize Corrective Feedback | Agreement Positives Build on Other's Ideas or Experience Work Joke | | | | | | |
| Silence, Laughter, Noise | | | | | | | | |
| <small>SAVI® is a registered trademark of Anita Simon and Yvonne Agazarian. Copyright © 2011 Simon & Agazarian</small> | | | | | | | | |

(Image: SAVI Grid – reproduced with permission of the author)

Round 3 was 'As If' – nice and neutral with Individualizing, Finding Facts and Influencing – but very little work being done. Finally, in Round 4 using Finding Facts, Influencing, Responding and Integrating squares, the players came to agreement and felt satisfied with the climate of their discussion. They were very surprised about how their feelings about each other had shifted from targeting and irritation to feeling closer, more curious and open to different views.

This pattern – called Problem Solving – has similarities with the impact of positivity, inquiry and ability to see the wider system on team performance in Losada's study of 60 Strategic Business Unit (SBU) teams. Researchers observed over 60 management teams and defined "high performing" teams as demonstrating

high profitability, high customer satisfaction, and high evaluations by superiors, peer, and subordinates. They observed teams by capturing statements made during business meetings and coding them on three dimensions: positivity / negativity; self-focused / other-focused; and inquiry / advocacy.

Losada defined positivity as support, encouragement and appreciation in contrast to negativity (disapproval, sarcasm, cynicism). *'A speech act was coded as "inquiry" if it involved a question aimed at exploring and examining a position and as "advocacy" if it involved arguing in favour of the speaker's viewpoint. A speech act was coded as "self" if it referred to the person speaking or to the group present at the lab or to the company the person speaking belonged, and it was coded as "other" if the reference was to a person or group outside the company to which the person speaking belonged. The coders were blind to the performance level of the teams at the time of observation. Performance data were used to categorise the teams only after their meeting had been observed and coded.'* (Losada and Heaphy, 2004: 745). Characteristics of high performing teams showed high levels of other-focused and inquiry-based statements, and a positivity ratio of about 6:1. The findings are summarised in the table here.

Table: Summary of Losada research

| | Ratios for the Three Bipolar Dimensions | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------|------------|
| | Inquiry/Advocacy | Positivity/Negativity | Other/Self |
| High-performance teams | 1.143 | 5.614 | 0.935 |
| Medium-performance teams | 0.667 | 1.855 | 0.622 |
| Low-performance teams | 0.052 | 0.363 | 0.034 |

With one major retailer, we used SAVI to role play the product review meetings, using Take 1, Take 2 and so on, trying out different communication strategies. People were able to see how they contributed to the dismissive responses they often received about their proposals by often Yes-Butting back or responding defensively. By Paraphrasing and asking for more information, they slowed themselves down and started to open up - and so did the climate in the meeting.

Interestingly, recent research (Edmondson 2012) suggests that the behaviours of successful teaming are highly correlated with verbal behaviours, namely:

- Speaking up – asking and answering questions, acknowledging errors, raising issues, exploring ideas
- Experimenting
- Reflecting – observing, questioning, discussing processes and outcomes regularly
- Listening intently – paraphrasing, building on others' ideas
- Integrating – synthesising different facts and points of view to create new possibilities

Conclusion

Being able to engage in healthy conflict is crucial if we are to move past either 'too much sameness' so that nothing changes, or 'too much conflict' so that we tear each other apart, or separate from each other in order to get rid of our differences.

Opening up to difference is not easy: it requires skill, practice and commitment. Part of opening up to difference involves slowing down enough so that our autonomic response is interrupted sooner rather than later. For facilitators, it means a commitment to notice and work with our own triggers around difference, so we can be more open to them. For leaders in organisations and in communities, it means an awareness that this is not easy and that we need to shift behaviours. Thinking of this in viral terms might be helpful. If we facilitate the achievement of sufficient critical mass and positive deviance from existing patterns, then things might indeed shift for the better (Herrero 2010-11).

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Engagement 2.0: co-creating connection

Julia Goga-Cooke, Marzia Arico and Max Mockett



To be fit for the future, companies need well developed collaboration networks. Currently, capabilities such as open innovation, generational cohesion, virtual working, and collaborative leadership present the biggest deficits and gaps. Companies that get them right will have a clear advantage. Harnessing the wisdom of crowds is becoming crucial to the process of collaboration and innovation. Companies must find new, qualitative ways of engaging their employees across boundaries.

This article explains why we need to develop fresh ways of collaborating. It explores how

we can tap into networks to create synergies for innovation, and illustrates the experience of Future of Work (FoW) in creating a 'wise crowd'. It describes how new forms of collaboration have been integrated within FoW, and concludes by sharing some of the learning that's being derived from this experience

Keywords

hot spots, future of work, FoWlab, networks for open innovation, wise crowd, reverse coaching

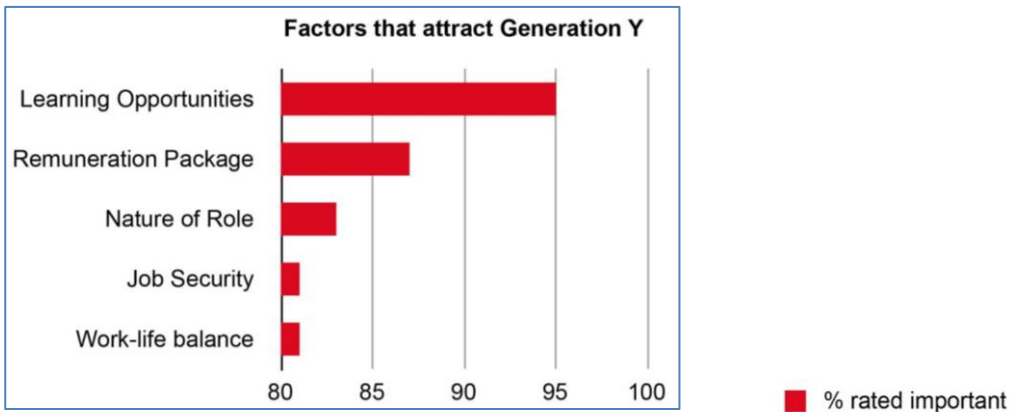
Why do we need new ways to collaborate?

The need for collaboration across boundaries is driven by a number of trends that impact the way we work (Lynda Gratton, 2011). The impact of these trends will only accelerate in the future. There are three trends in particular which we need to address:

First, we are seeing that globalisation is creating increasingly complex geographic and cultural networks, and will create new organisational boundaries over the coming decades. To benefit from the force of globalisation, organisations will need a deep understanding of the boundaries that exist within their organisation, and should proactively create mechanisms for collaboration across them.

Second, this last decade has welcomed into the workforce the most connected generation the world has ever seen, Generation Y. By 2020, Generation Y will form the biggest employee demographic. Understanding what motivates them, and empowering them with a voice, and with opportunities they appreciate, will be vital in the context of a war for high-skilled talent (see Fig. 1 below).

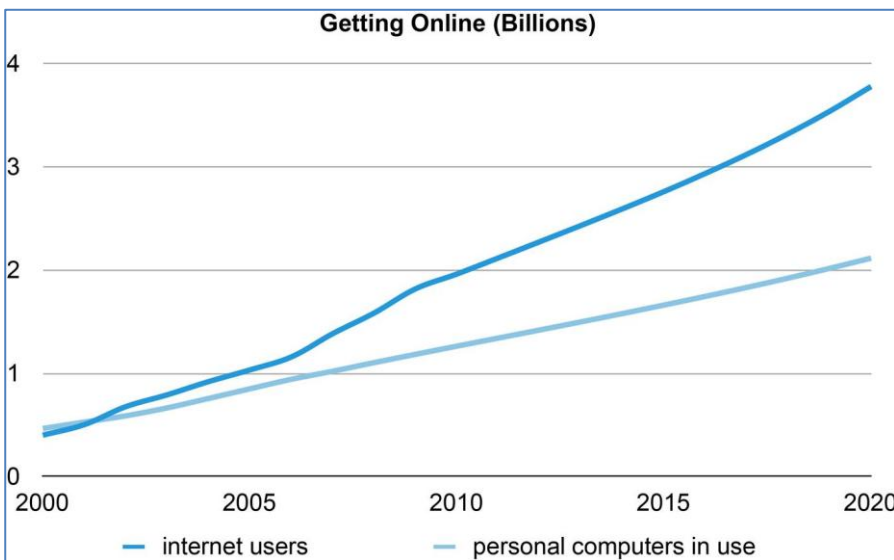
Fig. 1: What makes Gen Yers tick (Data Source: ACCA/Mercer)



But despite their size, members of Generation Y are only one part of the big mix. As people are beginning to work for longer, many organisations will consist of at least four generations, each bringing their own unique values and aspirations: Traditionalists (born 1928 to 1945), Baby Boomers (born 1945 to 1964), Generation X (born 1965 to 1979), Generation Y (born 1980 to 1995), and Generation Z (born after 1995). This rich mix presents a potential for conflict due to lack of understanding and cohesion, but at the same time, has the potential for rich pickings if leveraged.

Third, rapid developments in connectivity and collaborative technologies are empowering individuals to self-organise into online communities focused on common interests. Often, these communities become a powerful platform for knowledge-sharing and problem-solving (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Rapid developments in connectivity and collaborative technologies (Data Source: Gartner)



Companies have already started to reach into existing communities, both external and internal, for ideas, inspiration and problem-solving at low cost. Externally, companies like Google, Threadless and Amazon have created their own collective intelligence genomes, and are getting crowds to do what the business needs done (Malone, 2011). Internally, Tata Consultancy Services, Shell, IBM and Infosys are all approaching their employees for ideas and expertise, and turning them into innovative solutions.

Recognising Networks for Open Innovation

We are beginning to realise that knowledge is not necessarily held at the top of an organisation. It lives in a constellation of communities (Wenger, 2000), each taking care of a specific aspect of the competence that the organisation needs. We are also realising that whatever the field of knowledge and however big the organisation, it is impossible to own all the knowledge within any particular field.

Realising this, and finding the mechanisms to access the useful part of these knowledge pools, is only half the battle. The other half is knowing how to tap into this wisdom, and it is this ability that is giving companies like P&G, Shell and Infosys an innovative edge. They don't just add to knowledge by sitting in their silos; they are constantly moving knowledge into and out of the silos (Henry Chesbrough, 2006). As a result, the role of research departments is shifted from generating knowledge, to connecting and facilitating knowledge from different groups of expertise.

While networks for Open Innovation are a relatively new combination, there has been much research on the power of networks in the field of organisational knowledge and psychology, science, human history. Mark Granovetter's (1973; 1983) proposition about the strength of weak ties has influenced a lot of the thinking in the way that social networks function. Granovetter argues that local bridging ties between people across networks facilitate diverse thinking and cross-fertilisation more powerfully than those of close friendships. Everett Roger's (1970) theory of distribution of innovation brought to the helm the role networks play in this process. Powell (1990) was the first to identify the networks in organisations, as non-market or hierarchical forms. Manuel De Landa (1997) beautifully analysed how two forms of cities - hierarchical structures known as Central Place and meshwork-like assemblages or Network Systems which acted as nodes - existed and mixed in various degrees, giving rise to different cultural structures.; Barabasi (2003) in *Linked*, pulled together how everything is connected to everything else, and what this means for business, science and everyday life.

Informed by these insights, how do we create and take advantage of those meaningful connections?

Tapping into Networks for Open Innovation: building Future of Work (FoW) as a wise crowd

In 2009, I took a sabbatical to study design thinking and innovation at Central Saint Martin's in London. I had been piloting "My one mile network" at the BBC. This concept brought together area experts from a range of organisations like the BBC, LSE, the British Council, the British Museum, CSM, and SOAS. All were located round Central London and had a shared interest in a specific topic (e.g. African Studies, Water Futures). The goal was to share what they were doing, find synergies, and establish contact. Thus the 'one mile' represented both physical and virtual proximity. During my sabbatical, I wanted to expand my knowledge of the theory of innovation and networks in particular. As a bonus, I got to be part of a close group of Gen Yers who, for the first time, were not my reports but my peers and leaders. One of them, Marzia Arico, a talented Italian designer and innovation manager, became both a friend and later on a colleague.

During the year, I was particularly influenced by Henry Chesbrough's work on the theory of open innovation, and the work of Albert-Laszlo Barabasi on the array of networks that affect our lives. It gave me the passion to further explore how to build meaningful networks for innovation. Many of the examples I studied led me to believe that meaningful networks are determined by the close interdependency of three key factors:

Three key factors in meaningful networks

- The purpose that brings the community together.
- The willingness to collaborate.
- The “mile square” where they interact physically and virtually.

That year (2009), Lynda Gratton of the London Business School had published *Glow*. I had read her much acclaimed book *Hot Spots* (2007) and found her movement very inspiring. So, one afternoon, waiting for my next lecture to start, I knocked on Lynda’s door at LBS to pick her brains on my meaningful networks hypothesis.

By this time, Professor Gratton’s mind had moved to another big question: What will it be like to work 20 years from now? We chatted, we clicked, and seeing that, between us, we had a diversity of knowledge and skills that we could put them together to pursue our research interests. So at the end of our brief impromptu discussion, we had decided to research the future of work by harnessing the wisdom of innovation networks.

How to collaborate?

The first question was: “what type of collaboration?” There are various ways you can bring people together to collaborate for innovation. Gary Pisano and Roberto Verganti (2008) describe four different forms of collaboration:

1. *The Innovation Mall* is an open collaboration platform that allows anyone to propose a solution but whose hierarchical governance allows the company to choose which solutions it will use.
2. *The Innovation Community* allows its network members not only to propose solutions, but also to decide which solutions to use.
3. *The Elite Circle* is a closed network of experts, chosen by the company, which defines the problem and decides which solutions it will use.
4. *The Consortium* allows the members to choose the problems they will work on, and decide how to conduct that work.

Both Lynda and I had experience with Consortiums, so that was the form we chose. The members would be from both academia and business, and in a flat open structure we would develop a collaborative exchange of academic insights and business research and practice. This became the Future of Work Research Consortium.

Embracing diversity

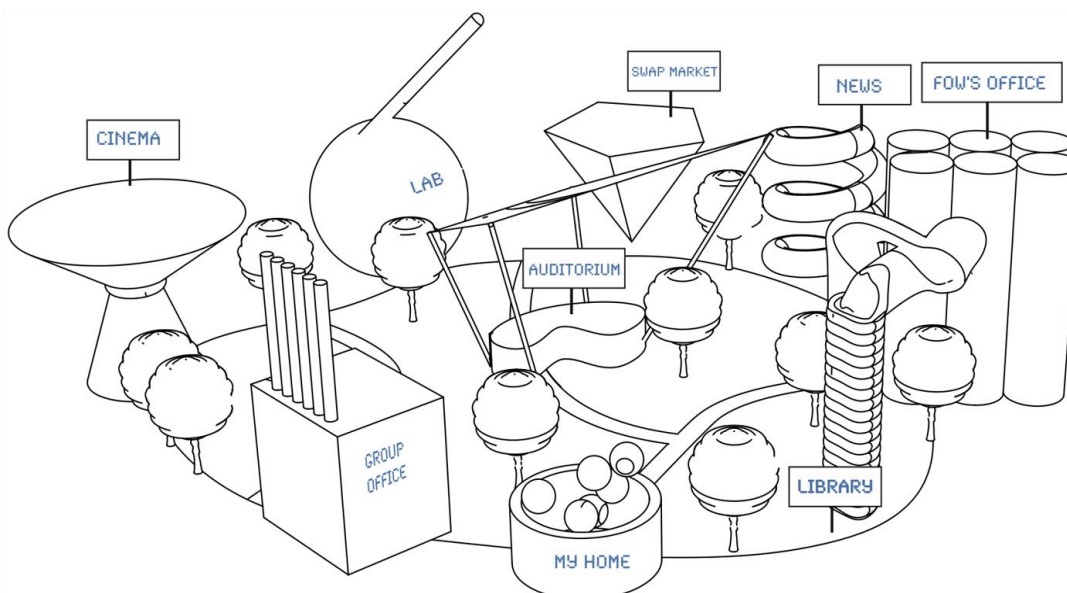
The second decision we took was to put Diversity at the heart of the selection criteria we developed to choose companies and members. As a result, we sought to attract companies from different industries (banking, manufacturing, retail, health, telecommunication, design, and energy), from different business models (public, private, partnerships, and not-for-profit), and from different locations (Europe, America, Asia, and Africa). We started with 20 organisations, and in the course of three years, the membership has grown to more than 70 global corporations. Interestingly, many of these organisations are also competitors, like Randstad, Manpower, RBS, Lloyds, Standard Chartered, John Lewis, Microsoft, Cisco, BT, Shell, Oman Oil, TCS, Save the Children, and the Singaporean Government. Together, however, they have been researching, experimenting and designing the Future of Work.

Creating a 'wise crowd'

A wise crowd is a large group of people who share similar interests, and collaborate towards a common goal. Wise crowds share ideas, build on each other's contributions, and agree on what actions to take in order to solve a specific problem; in a way that no single individual could do on their own, no matter how smart or well informed they are (Surowiecki 2004).

With the aim of bringing together a wise crowd, which would explore and design the future of work, we decided to create a microcosm of what the teams would be like. Collaborations would stretch across many types of boundaries, with a wise crowd made up of women and men from different backgrounds and functions, different locations and representing at least three generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. The same applied to our research team, which from the start consisted of two Baby Boomers, two Gen Yers, two Gen Xers, and was based in the UK, France, Germany, USA, Singapore and Mumbai.

Fig. 3: Prototyping FoWville



Creating the FoWville community

The next challenge came in the form of community architecture. We set off to design FoWville, the village in which our group would collaborate. It was a live continuum of face-to-face / online / face-to-face sequences, where the face-to-face events were decided in advance, whereas the online platform was there for people to connect in their own time between live events. We soon found that, while there were a lot of peaks on our online platform around face-to-face events, it was harder to keep the conversations alive all the time. There were two key reasons: members were time-poor, and our technology was overly complex. As some members commented, this was a problem they faced within their companies too. So, the challenge for head of design Marzia Arico and head of research Max Mockett became: could we design collaboration flows over a short burst of time, which would yield meaningful conversation and insights?

Marzia explains how we dealt with the constraints this particular community presented:

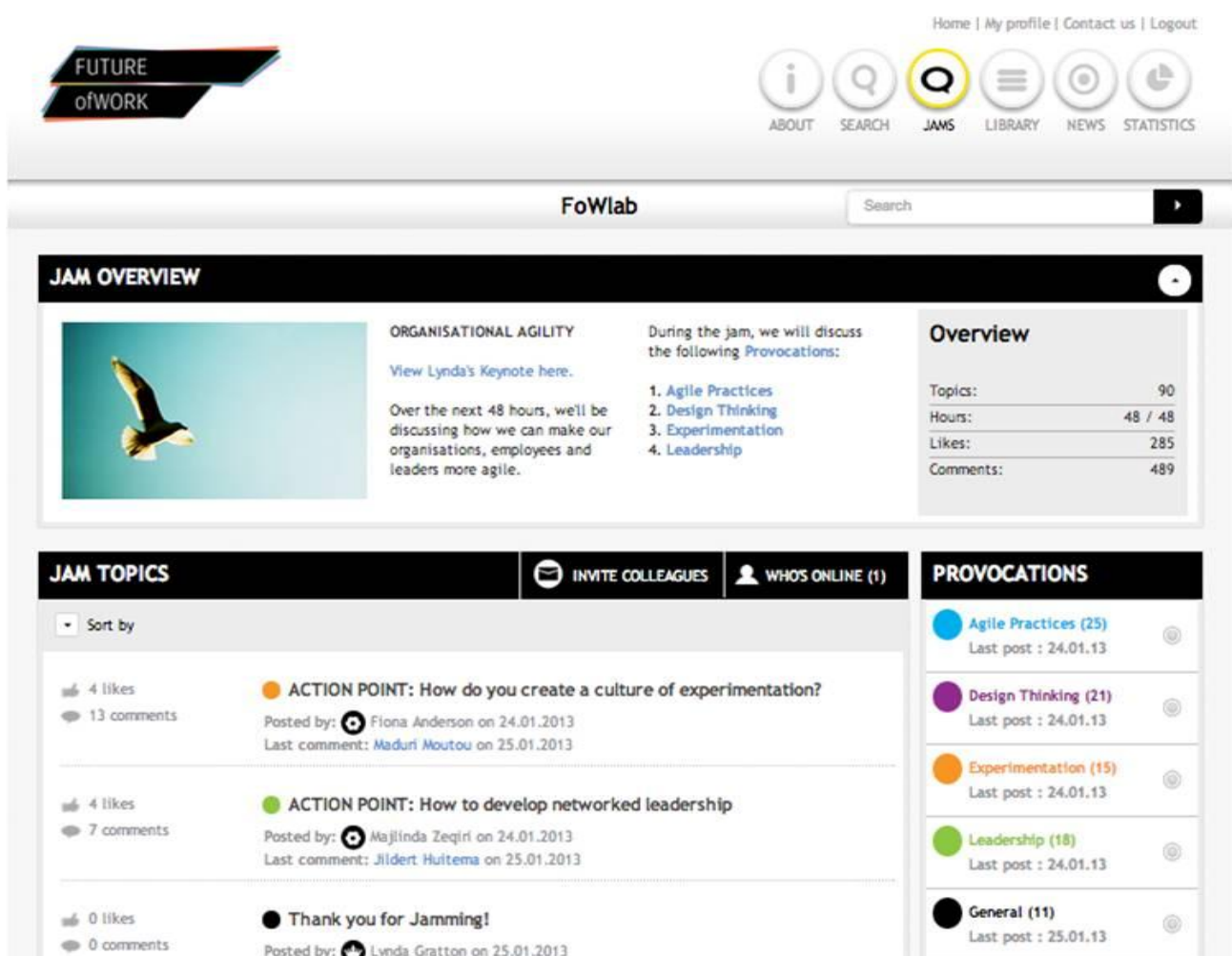
"We aimed at developing a sophisticated platform with a simple interface, to turn a complex technology into a friendly tool accessible to everybody. Our end-users played a fundamental role in

achieving this objective through rapid feedback and fast implementation, the final interface is the result of a long process of co-design with our clients.”

For Max, the key factor for success was the fundamental role that our end-users played:

“Rapid feedback was essential in making sure that our prototypes were continually refined. We shifted from a general forum model to a more focused jam structure on the back of user feedback, and the whole methodology was a response to the issue of time scarcity among users. We found that creating an intuitive environment allowed users to dip in and learn quickly, while facilitation encouraged a sense of focus and urgency.” (See Fig. 4 below)

Fig. 4: Screenshot of the co-designed FoWlab interface



The emergence of FoWlab

After experimenting with several pilots, platforms and combinations of content frameworks, FoWlab was born: a real-time, thematic, online conversation platform. It was intuitive in its design, and was supported and guided by a team of research facilitators, who could engage a crowd of a few hundred to a few thousand people over a period of 48-72 hours. (You can watch the video about FoWlab here: <http://vimeo.com/48140037>.)

Our first FoWlab conversation with our Future of Work Consortium members was around Technology and

Productivity, and we've since run many FoWlab conversations, on topics ranging from Complex Collaboration to Generational Cohesion, and from Future Talent to Organisational Agility. We have also taken FoWlab within the confines of a single company, using it to bring together four thousand employees across functions and locations, in a real-time brainstorm around new ways of working, new paradigms of leadership, and new values. This conversation allowed employees to share experiences with colleagues they would never otherwise meet, and come up with action steps for themselves, their teams and the wider company to help lead the organisation into the future.

As with any big event, FoWlab is a partnership and a co-production. As such, it requires trust on credit, and depends on building close relationships. Through reverse coaching, you learn from others, and others learn from you. As each organisation is different, delivering the right design means that it is crucial to learn from each company how internal communication happens there, how the hierarchy works, and how open their culture is to expressing ideas.

Risk-taking

Organisations are sometimes daunted by the sheer scale of bringing together so many employees. One of the biggest uncertainties is what happens when thousands of employees come together? What sentiments and energy will be released? Helping them to understand the concept and process, and the way conversations are guided and managed, builds the confidence that is needed to manage an exciting risk and create an inspiring collaboration.

Five lessons from FoWlab

There are many lessons we have learnt in this journey. Here are five that we consider key for a successful FoWlab conversation. Unsurprisingly, several of the basic principles of good facilitation apply:

1. *Empathise Early In The Process With The 'Why'.* Empathy is not just important in understanding the purpose of bringing together thousands of people. It also helps the partner organisation spell out a clear intent and share it with the people that will take part in it. Many facilitative methods can be used to empathise with their needs. We have chosen to apply design-thinking techniques such as story boarding, brainstorming, mood boards, persona cards, and so on, and the results have been very rewarding.

Fig. 5: Sample material used to empathise with the "Why?" of FoWlab



Sometimes, very difficult conversations which start with vague or broad intents can lead to a group member saying "Got it!" after which the group formulates a good simple sentence to answer: 'What are you doing? Why are you doing it?' We have learnt how crucial that simple sentence is in all subsequent communications, be it to invite and excite participants, or to explain the concept coherently to all stakeholders in various functions across different layers of hierarchy in the organisation.

2. *Help the Wise Crowd Become Smarter.* Once the intent is defined, it is crucial to deconstruct it, in order to map the boundaries for the topic and to identify the key provocations that will guide it. Provocations are important, as they frame the conversation into discrete topics that help avoid overlap and repetition, but also focus the conversation into areas of interest to the research team. For each provocation, our team draws up questions before the FoWlab conversation runs, and inserts these questions to the platform as the conversation evolves. We've quickly learned the importance of creating inspiring questions that produce stimulating, open minded and fast-flowing conversations.
3. *Create Meaningful Conversations.* FoWlab is a big show, and as such, the question of who takes part is important. While it is very attractive to have the whole population of your company participate (after all, IBM brought 150,000 employees together in a jam session in 2001), we have found that a meaningful selection of diverse participants numbering between several hundred and several thousand will produce a conversation that has energy, is insightful, and allows participants to follow real-time conversations threads rather than rely only on data mining and search engines. Keeping the numbers reasonable and opting for a representative selection has two other benefits. First, it helps create a meaningful community of catalysts who will take the outcomes further. Second, it allows a better direct connection between employees across boundaries, thus becoming a 'hotspot for innovation'.
We have also witnessed how participants found the act of connecting itself to be an exciting and novel experience, and many show a hunger to connect to the wider community in an informal way, where everybody is at the same level of participant status despite the different organisational hierarchies.

What FoWlab participants have said

Here are a few comments from participants:

'There's too many good ideas within our network not to be able to share them.'

'It provides the opportunity to see how things are done in firms at different locations and might help us find what best practice is used.'

'I would love to always connect with my colleagues and share my thoughts and experience and learn from others...'

'I think the tool was very useful in connecting a very diverse set of people.'

'I prefer face-to-face discussion when I'm working with teams, but with projects similar to this scale, I believe it breaks the barriers to communication.'

As the conversation develops, we also see the emergence of new FoWlab leaders, who are passionate about the topic and for whom the virtual platform is the right form of expression. They are power users, natural leaders, particularly good at driving the conversation to stimulate ideas, and spot opportunities. We call them our 'Undiscovered Leaders'. You may not have heard their voices in face-to-face meetings, and in the majority of cases these people are quite shy and silent, but they exhibit confidence and insight in online environments, and can become a powerful source of change as collaboration becomes increasingly virtual.

4. *Pre-define a Structure That Encourages Active Participation.* FoWlab lasts between 48 and 72 hours, to allow people in different time zones to drop by when it is convenient for them. The conversation is structured into three phases:
 - a. Ideation: gather ideas, stories, and examples during the first 24 hours,
 - b. Debate: deepen and refine a select number of issues in the second day.
 - c. Action: create and capture tangible insights in the third day.People are encouraged to participate in all three phases. We've seen that the majority of participants go in and out several times during each day and stay for about 30 minutes on average. Active participation varies from between 30% - 50%.
5. *Independent Facilitation is Crucial to Success.* A collaborative engagement of thousands of people needs a team of facilitators operating around the clock to guide, shape and keep the conversation on track. Our facilitators uncover insights that might not be easily visible, analyze the conversation as it develops, and summarises key insights from each Provocation.

Opening up to Engagement 2.0

Skilful facilitators have a feel for when and where to push, and when to stand back and let the topics evolve organically. Though we make use of cutting-edge data-mining and analytics to help process keywords and sentiment, there are two very special roles that no technology can substitute, at least for now: first, in creating a forward looking, constructive frame for the conversation; second, in spotting when there is reluctance for openness, and skilfully reframing questions that fail to engage. Finally, facilitators are removed from participants but not above them. Though they are subject matter experts, they are not conversation leaders. And because of this, conversations feel authentic and, most importantly, democratic. In FoWlab, the wise crowd is all that matters. It is our job to ensure they have something to talk about.

Though FoWlab is still young, and given that each experience brings exciting challenges, we have learned that there is a huge desire among employees to connect and voice their thoughts and aspirations. The wisdom is with them. You only need to know how to bring it out.

As one participant commented, "This is Engagement 2.0. Make it happen!"

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Marzia Arico is a creative thinker. She believes in the power of interbreeding concepts and bringing design thinking to the innovation process in order to exploit new opportunities for businesses and to create a better end user experience for our clients.

Max Mockett is head of research and interactive technology at the Hot Spots Movement. As head of research, he develops new insights through co-creational research programmes, diagnostic capabilities and statistical output.

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Journey to a generative economy

Learning about alternative ownership models through Open Source design

Marjorie Kelly



'Generative (economic) models are inherently a collective phenomenon, for these models are emerging today not from the head of some new Adam Smith or Karl Marx, but from the longing in many hearts, the genius of many minds, the effort of many hands to build what we know instinctively that we need. With a silent intelligence, these designs offer a rich, open source treasury showing how the deep blueprints of cultural understanding can be rewritten.'

Keywords

extractive ownership, generative ownership, open source design, social architecture, economic democracy, emergence, self-organisation

My quest

I've come to the coast of Maine to answer a question that I've posed myself: can a new kind of economy – a life-serving, generative economy – be set in motion in the state that is the poor cousin of New England? If so, how? What system design makes it possible? It seems to me that the North End Lobster Co-op, where people make an estimated \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year from hard manual labour, might offer some useful lessons. In writing my book *Owning Our Future: The Emerging Ownership Revolution*, I've come on this visit as part of a wide-ranging journey to understand new kinds of social architectures emerging spontaneously all over the world. I've studied the wind guilds of Denmark that co-operatively finance wind farms, the community forests of Mexico that are governed by indigenous peoples, large corporations like IKEA and Novo Nordisk that are controlled by foundations and hence mission-focused, and open source models like Wikipedia that are owned by no one and managed collectively.

Over many years as a business journalist, I've seen how Wall Street ownership plays a crucial yet invisible role in shaping the behaviour of corporations and the economy. I call that traditional model *extractive ownership*, for its aim is maximum extraction of financial wealth. Various emerging alternatives seem to offer something genuinely different. I call it *generative ownership*, for its purpose is generating the conditions for life. Amid the profusion of models of generative design, I've found common lessons behind them, and my hope is that if I can identify and name those design patterns, they might serve as an open source design repository for economic transformation. This is the quest that has brought me to Maine.



(Image source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMaine.JPG>)

By JRATL (Own work) [CC-BY-SA-3.0

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What I found in Maine

With me is Keith Bisson from Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), of Wiscasset, Maine—the *community development corporation* (CDC) that helped a group of five lobster fishermen obtain \$380,000 in financing to buy this place in 2002. The co-op now has 24 lobstermen as members, and activity from this property supports more than 40 families. Keith tells me:

“A lot of those guys used to fish on the town wharf. They had to haul their own bait and fuel every day. When they went to buy bait they’d be taken advantage of by wholesalers.” Owing land gives them guaranteed access to the water, as well as a secure place for winter storage of boats and traps. With a bait cooler on-site, they can buy bait collectively at better prices. And a lobster buyer comes regularly to the co-op so lobsters are moved efficiently.

Access to water is important. It’s hard for working folks whose livelihood is dependent on water to afford to buy waterfront property.”

Of the 5,300 miles of shorefront in Maine, only 25 miles are still in use for fishing and marine industries. To preserve that land as working waterfront, CEI helped this lobster co-operative put a *working waterfront easement* on the property. Modelled after a conservation easement, this innovative ownership design was created by CEI and funded by a \$6.75 million state bond program. Some two dozen working waterfronts have been preserved, allowing hundreds of fishing families to support themselves. The easement is a covenant that attaches permanently to the property deed, guaranteeing that land will always be used for commercial fishing. Essentially, it involves selling development rights to the State of Maine.

This lobster co-op received a cheque for \$135,250—yet it maintains ownership and use of the land.¹

Still another powerful ownership design represented here is Coastal Enterprises itself, a private non-profit corporation with a generative mission. Its founder, Ron Phillips, is a former seminary student who chose to pursue social justice through economic development. CEI's mission is to create healthy communities in which everyone can reach his or her full potential. It focuses on creating local ownership and local wealth.

With a staff of 85, CEI operates also as a *community development financial institution (CDFI)*, with more than \$700 million under management. It's one of the 1,000 CDFIs found in all 50 states, and it's particularly innovative in designing social and ecological covenants into transactions. Fishery borrowers are asked to sign agreements to take part in a fish tagging project, collecting scarce biological data.² A manufacturer borrower might be asked to commit to an Employment and Training Agreement (ETAG), to hire the unemployed, or to offer training to immigrants.³ In short, CEI practices stakeholder finance, where capital is a friend to the community.

Economic democracy at work

Here, clinging to the rocky shores of Maine, a new kind of economy is groping its way into being. People are making a living in difficult circumstances and modelling an inclusive economy along the way. The ecological commons is benefiting dramatically. At a time when the vast majority of the world's fish stocks are overexploited, the Maine lobster industry remains vibrant. Since the late 1980s, catches have been at record levels, despite intense commercial activity. While ground fish stocks—such as cod and halibut—support only 50 fishing boats in the Gulf of Maine, those same waters support 5,600 lobster boats.⁴

The reason for this success is a series of ecological and social ground rules that have evolved over time in Maine. After auto-trawlers decimated the lobster grounds here in the 1930s, a law was passed in 1947 stipulating that lobsters could be caught only in lobster traps. Other ecological rules also evolved, prohibiting the taking of egged females, protecting juveniles until they were appropriately large, and protecting older lobsters known to be good brood stock.



The Maine Lobsterman, a sculpture cast by Norman Therrien in 1977 from a plaster model made by Victor Kahill for the World's Fair 1939. It shows a man pegging a lobster. It is located in Portland, Maine. Photo by Slowking4, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Wikimedia Commons.)

¹ Author communications via email and phone with Hugh Cowperthwaite of Coastal Enterprises, Inc.; also <http://www.ceimaine.org/Fisheries>.

² <http://www.ceimaine.org/Resources/Documents/FISHTAG.pdf>.

³ Coastal Enterprises, Inc., <http://www.ceimaine.org/>.

⁴ Ted Ames, interview with the author at Bowdoin College, March 30,

As the lobster industry recovered and came under increasing pressure, a new law was enacted in 1995. Here the issue was not only ecological rules, but social architectures. The law did three things: it established individual trap limits; controlled entry into the industry; and created an innovative zone management system. An economic democracy was created.⁵

In the seven zone councils, lobster license holders elect representatives by a principle of one person, one vote -- very different from the corporate world, where voting rights are proportional to wealth holdings. This empowers fishermen with small and medium-sized operations. As James Acheson wrote in a study of the lobster industry: "These men had grown tired of watching 'big fishermen' or 'hogs' take a disproportionate amount of the lobsters and cause huge trap tangles in the process." In passing trap limits for their zones, the little guys rein in that behaviour.⁶

The new law also involved an innovative ownership rule. It stipulates that lobster fishing in sensitive inshore waters can be done only by *owner-operated boats*. Large corporate-owned boats are still allowed in offshore waters, where only big boats can operate safely. But corporate boats can no longer fish for lobster in coastal waters, where breeding occurs. It's a powerful use of ownership design as a tool to protect both commons and fishing communities. According to Acheson, the ownership rule is explicitly intended to prevent corporations like Shaftmaster Corporation—which operates out of New Hampshire, using big trawlers with hired captains and crews tending large numbers of traps—from coming to Maine and dominating and destroying lobster grounds.⁷

Big boats like those "could clean out one area and move to another," I was told by Ted Ames, a fisherman-scientist who also won a 2005 MacArthur Award (the genius award). "The business plan for that kind of operation is completely different from the small-scale operator, where boats are invariably owned by individuals or families."

The ownership rule is supplemented by another provision requiring an apprenticeship period. No one can obtain a lobster license without working two years on another lobster boat, where stewardship traditions and lobstering etiquette are learned.

Framing the generative economy

Both lobsters and fishing families thrive in Maine, because the system works at many levels to restrain extractive behaviour and encourage generative behaviour. There are many kinds of rules here, but operating in the background, as a kind of wire frame supporting the system, are different kinds of ownership architectures. As Acheson wrote:

According to the law of Maine, all of the oceans, lakes, and rivers are public property. Ocean waters are held in trust by the state for all citizens. All ocean beaches to the high tide mark are owned by the state, and all citizens have legal access to them.⁸

⁵ James Acheson, *Capturing the Commons: Devising Institutions to Manage the Maine Lobster Industry* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2003), 105. Acheson also wrote *The Lobster Gangs of Maine* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988). Acheson, *Capturing the Commons*, 105.

⁶ Acheson, *Capturing the Commons*, 105.

⁷ Ibid. 119.

⁸ Ibid. 24.

At this level, the overarching ownership concept is the ancient notion of *trust*: holding something in trust for the common good and for future generations. As trustee, the state of Maine holds the bundle of twigs of various property rights. And out of that bundle it separates use rights, allocating certain of those rights to small owner-operators, leaving a different set of rights to corporate owners.

This *law of the ocean* is one supportive frame here. Another frame is provided by various *enterprise ownership designs*, such as cooperatives, CDCs, and CDFIs. Because of those sturdy background patterns, Coastal Enterprises can emerge as a CDC/CDFI, another part of the ecosystem of support for lobstermen.

CEI, in turn, devised a new contractual form of ownership design with the *working waterfront covenant*, which helps keep waterfront property in the hands of fishing families. Fishing families themselves join together to form groups like the North End Lobster Cooperative, which helps them to thrive in a competitive environment. At various points, these ownership designs emerge from the background like knots on a fishing net, shaping the energies of the system into stable patterns that tend to create generative outcomes.

You can view a short (3.55 minutes) video of a Public Service Announcement for Coastal Enterprises Inc in Maine by clicking on the following link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_1nFquDuwQ&feature=player_detailpage#t=.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_1nFquDuwQ&feature=player_detailpage#t=)

What is explicitly restricted in this picture is extractive design. Corporate boats can operate only in designated areas. Instead of permitting limitless liberty to absentee owners for the seeking of wealth—by hired hands indifferent to local custom—Maine set spinning a new governing pattern. It operates by generative principles, like the principle that the right of extraction has limits. This principle holds that:

- the right to make a living comes before the right to make a killing
- fairness for the many is more important than maximizing by the few
- sustaining the prosperity of larger living systems, both human and wild, is the root condition for the flourishing of all
- these new economic principles are to be grounded in governance of, by, and for the community.

Thus fairness, sustainability, community: the fundamental values of the generative economy are all at work. Through design.

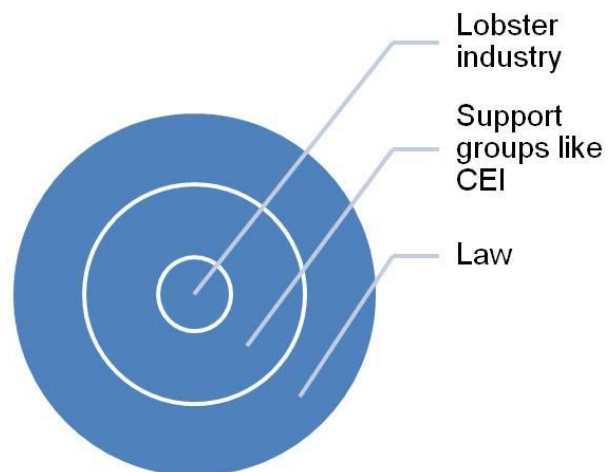


Figure 1- a generative social ecosystem

A social ecosystem of generative design

The Maine lobster industry is often cited as an example of successful collective action in “common pool resource management.”⁹ Collective action stories like this offer solutions to the famous “tragedy of the commons,” articulated by Garrett Hardin. He said that if there were a common pasture on which everyone could graze cows, soon the land would be overgrazed and become worthless. The only solutions, he wrote, were state control or private ownership—“either socialism or the privatism of free enterprise.”¹⁰

But in 2009, Elinor Ostrom won the Nobel Prize in economics (the first woman to do so) for research showing that old dichotomy to be false. All over the world, she and her colleagues found communities that spontaneously devised ways to manage the commons successfully. These include irrigation systems in the Philippines, forests in Africa and Asia, grazing systems in Switzerland, and groundwater regimes in California. As Ostrom wrote, many of these involve “rich mixtures of ‘private-like’ and ‘public-like’ institutions defying classification in a sterile dichotomy.” She titled her Nobel lecture “Beyond Markets and States.”¹¹



(Image source: North End Lobster Co-Operative Facebook page)

A similar process was at work in Maine. The notion of lobster zones has its genesis in a history of territoriality in the lobster industry going back generations. A newcomer can't just show up and start throwing traps in the water without incurring the wrath of locals. By time-honoured tradition, lobstermen use small areas near their home harbour, working waters their families have worked for decades, which they defend vigorously.

As Acheson wrote, “At some point, usufructory (use) rights strengthened into a sense of ownership, giving people justification for defending the areas against the incursions of others.” The lobstering territories were ownership in embryo. This territorial system, he continued, is “the root institution governing the lobster

industry, making possible the generation of other kinds of rule systems.” The territorial system, Acheson said, “helped produce a sense of stewardship and one of the most effective conservation programs in any fishery in the industrialized world.”¹²

Yet in Maine, far more is at work than spontaneous, informal customs. A whole range of new formal economic architectures are in use, which go beyond old notions of traditional private property versus state intervention. Alternative ownership designs play key roles: co-operatives, community development

⁹ James Acheson, *Capturing the Commons: Devising Institutions to Manage the Maine Lobster Industry* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2003), 8.

¹⁰ Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162, 1243-1248 (1968) <http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/misc/webfeat/sotp/commons.xhtml>.

¹¹ Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14; Ostrom, “Beyond Markets and States,” Nobel Prize lecture, December 9, 2009.

¹² *Ibid.* 41, 221, 224.

corporations, CDFIs. And these models operate inside a larger frame of supportive infrastructure—a *social ecosystem* of generative design.¹³ The law operates in the background to help bring this economy into existence and hold it in place—yet its role is more innovative than top-down regulation. A panoply of supportive institutions and rules have evolved here mostly from the ground up—with “ground” meaning the bottom of the ocean, where lobster live and breed, and from which fishermen scratch out a living.

Emergence as a path to large-scale change

In the Maine lobster industry we see a process that systems thinking calls *emergence*. Instead of imposing abstract, large-scale concepts from the top down, the governing policies in this case emerged from the community. As physicist Fritjof Capra observes, in natural systems, transformational change happens when traditional patterns reach “critical points of instability,” creating a crisis that is resolved by the spontaneous emergence of new ordered patterns. This is known as *self-organisation*, or simply emergence. “Creativity—the generation of new forms—is a key property of all living systems,” Capra says. “Life constantly reaches out into novelty.”¹⁴

Seeing the emergence of a new economy as a natural process is different from thinking of the competition

of two ideologies vying for dominance, which is the paradigm of capitalism versus communism. Change as an emergent process doesn’t mean the absence of crisis or conflict. Both were present in Maine. And it doesn’t mean that some universally beloved outcome is reached. Solutions adopted in Maine generally favoured one group at the expense of another. These things are natural in social systems. What emergence does mean, as an approach to policy, is starting small, proceeding organically, scaling up existing practice, and trusting that a creative solution is present in the very circumstances causing a crisis. Emergence also means that solutions may first appear not in politics but in business. One role of policy is to formalise and scale up what has emerged.

The process of emergence mirrors that of evolution, where nature discovers designs through trial and error. A variety of new designs are tried out, and those that succeed are replicated and spread. In social systems, as Meg Wheatley from the Berkana Institute suggested, the formation of networks is central to emergence. “We don’t need to convince large numbers of people to change,” Wheatley wrote; “instead we need to connect with kindred spirits” who share a common vision. In this way, separate, disconnected local actions begin to spring up simultaneously. When they “connect with each other as networks, then strengthen as



(image source: Facebook page of the North End Lobster Co-Operative)

¹³ For this notion of an “ecosystem” of supportive institutions, I am indebted to Heerad Sabeti. See the paper, *The Emerging Fourth Sector*, Fourth Sector, <http://www.FourthSector.net/learn/fourth-sector/>.

¹⁴ Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: A Science for Sustainable Living* (New York: Anchor Books/Random House, 2002), 14.

communities of practice, suddenly and surprisingly a new system emerges at a greater level of scale.” Powerful emergent phenomena can appear without warning, such as the organic food movement. What can’t be accomplished by politics or strategy just happens.¹⁵

What can block emergence is the lack of clear mental models. Resource depletion often occurs, Elinor Ostrom and her co-authors wrote, when governments adopt schemes to privatise or centralise resource management in ways “that undermine or destroy communal rights.” Problems arise, she continued, “because the state does not recognise or support informal common-property regimes.” Lacking a simple mental model that allows them to see what’s going on, government leaders blunder.¹⁶

Naming aids seeing; four broad categories of generative ownership design

Much of the work of creating clear mental models is a process of naming. In the broad field of generative ownership design, this work isn’t yet far advanced. The sheer abundance of designs makes it hard to see that a unified phenomenon is at work. It can help to think in terms of a single *family* of generative design. Within it we can separate out different broad *categories*, within which there are various particular *models*.

In my work, I’ve seen four broad categories of generative ownership design—many of which I saw in Maine. Rather than a definitive categorisation, consider this a loose grouping, possibly a starting point for further work by others.

1. *Commons ownership and governance*. Here, assets are held or governed in *common*. The ocean, a forest, land, a park, a municipal power plant (like Hull Wind) is held or governed *indivisibly by a community*.
2. *Stakeholder ownership*. This is ownership by people with a *human stake in a private enterprise*—as opposed to a purely speculative, financial stake. It includes cooperatives, partnerships, credit unions, mutual insurance companies, employee-owned firms, and family-owned companies. But for these models to be generative, their purpose must be life serving (not all mutual, employee, or family ownership can be considered generative).
3. *Social enterprise*. These organisations have a *primary social or environmental mission* and use business methods to pursue it. They can be nonprofits, subsidiaries of nonprofits, or private businesses. Social enterprises sometimes blur the line between for-profit and non-profit.
4. *Mission-controlled corporations*. These are corporations with a strong social mission that are *owned* in conventional ways (often with publicly traded shares), yet they keep *governing control* in mission-oriented hands. They include the large foundation-controlled companies common across northern Europe. A family or a trust can also be in control.

The law governing ocean waters in Maine is an example of commons ownership. The lobster co-operatives are a form of stakeholder ownership. Coastal Enterprises, Inc. is an example of a social enterprise. These different enterprises use different ownership designs toward similar ends—to create the conditions for life.

¹⁵ Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, “Lifecycle of Emergence: Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale,” Berkana Institute, 2006, <http://www.berkana.org/articles/lifecycle.htm>.

¹⁶ Amy R. Poteete, Marco A. Janssen, Elinor Ostrom, *Working Together: Collective Action, the Commons, and Multiple Methods in Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 48.

Five patterns of design

Since boundaries between these often aren't clear, it can also be helpful to think in terms of *patterns of design*, as a way to reveal common shapes in the profusion of various models.

In ownership design, five essential patterns work together to create either extractive or generative design: purpose, membership, governance, capital, and networks. Extractive ownership has a Financial Purpose: maximizing profits. Generative ownership has a Living Purpose: creating the conditions for life. While corporations today have Absentee Membership, with owners disconnected from the life of enterprise, generative ownership has Rooted Membership, with ownership held in human hands. While extractive ownership involves Governance by Markets, with control by capital markets on autopilot, generative designs have Mission-Controlled Governance, with control by those focused on social mission. While extractive investments involve Casino Finance, alternative approaches involve Stakeholder Finance, where capital becomes a partner rather than a master. Instead of Commodity Networks, where goods are traded based solely on price, generative economic relations are supported by Ethical Networks, which offer collective support for social and ecological norms.

The design of economic power

The design of economic power is summarised in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: The Architecture of Ownership

| EXTRACTIVE OWNERSHIP | GENERATIVE OWNERSHIP |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Financial Purpose</i> : maximising profits in the short term | 1. <i>Living Purpose</i> : creating the conditions for life over the long term |
| 2. <i>Absentee Membership</i> : ownership disconnected from the life of the enterprise | 2. <i>Rooted Membership</i> : ownership in human hands |
| 3. <i>Governance by Markets</i> : control by capital markets on autopilot | 3. <i>Mission-Controlled Governance</i> : control by those dedicated to social mission |
| 4. <i>Casino Finance</i> : capital as master | 4. <i>Stakeholder Finance</i> : capital as friend |
| 5. <i>Commodity Networks</i> : trading focused solely on price and profits | 5. <i>Ethical Networks</i> : collective support for ecological and social norms |

Generative design, in essence, means kinds of ownership that have a Living Purpose, with at least one other design pattern that serves to hold that purpose in place (otherwise, what you have is not a design but only a good intention). With lobster co-operatives, we see a Living Purpose of helping members to support their families, not an aim of maximising profits. Rooted Membership is also a defining element; the people who use the facility own it - they're the members. They also govern it. As a community development financial institution (CDFI), Coastal Enterprises practices Stakeholder Finance to carry out its mission; its aim isn't extracting financial wealth from communities but helping them to thrive. Yet it makes loans, not grants. It blurs the line between for-profit and non-profit, because it uses business methods to pursue a social purpose. As a CDFI, Coastal Enterprises is also part of an Ethical Network of other CDFIs, sharing similar goals (CDFIs are formally recognised in federal law).

Generative models are inherently a collective phenomenon, for these models are emerging today not from the head of some new Adam Smith or Karl Marx, but from the longing in many hearts, the genius of many minds, the effort of many hands to build what we know instinctively that we need. With a silent intelligence, these designs offer a rich, open source treasury showing how the deep blueprints of cultural understanding can be rewritten. They're part of the "metaphysical reconstruction" that E. F. Schumacher said would be needed to transform our economy.

At the heart of the shift from extractive to generative design is a shift from the parts to the whole, which Fritjof Capra emphasises is the central aspect of the conceptual revolution we now need. "The shift from the parts to the whole can also be seen as a shift from objects to relationships," he says.¹⁷ It's a process that begins not with law, or even with grand ideas. It begins with relationships: to each other and to the living earth. When property is designed in a generative way, it's no longer about standing apart from the objects we own and squeezing every penny from them. It's about being interwoven with the life around us. It's no longer about extraction, but about belonging.

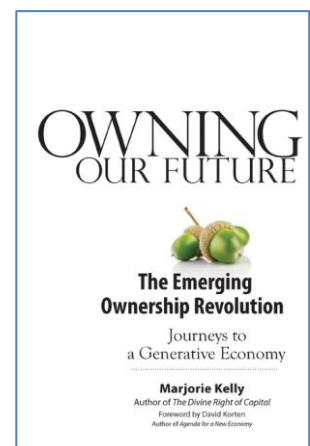
About the author

Marjorie Kelly is a fellow with the Tellus Institute (www.Tellus.org) in Boston and director of ownership strategy with Cutting Edge Capital, a national consulting firm (<http://cuttingedgecapital.com>). Kelly co-founded *Business Ethics* magazine and *Corporation 20/20*. She specialises in ownership and financial design for social mission.

This article is adapted from Chapter 8 ("Bringing Forth a World: From Individualism to Community") in her 2012 book *Owning Our Future: The Emerging Ownership Revolution*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers (www.OwningOurFuture.com).

Marjorie's first book, *The Divine Right of Capital*, was named one of Library Journal's 10 Best Business Books of 2001. Her writings and op-eds have appeared in many publications, including Harvard Business Review, New England Law Review, Chief Executive, Boston Globe, Yes! Magazine and San Francisco Chronicle. Kelly was co-founder and for 20 years president of Business Ethics magazine, known for its annual ranking of the 100 Best Corporate Citizens and Social Investing Awards.

www.MarjorieKelly.com



¹⁷ Capra, *The Web of Life*, 31–33.

An inconvenient truth?

The destiny of ICT4D rests with those it originally set out to help

Ken Banks



ICT4D's "inconvenient truth" is that it is currently attempting to inappropriately fix problems on behalf of local people who themselves can often understand and solve them much better. A fulfilled future for ICT4D (of which m4d – or mobiles-for-development - is an increasingly dominant part) is not in the hands of western corporates or international NGOs meeting in high-profile gatherings. Nor is it in the hands of our education establishments who keep busy training computer scientists and business graduates in the West to fix the problems of 'others'. The whole development agenda is shifting, and I predict a future of "disruptive development" - a major disconnect between what 'we' think needs to be done, and what those closest to the problems think needs to be done.

I conclude by arguing that the ICT4D community – education establishments, donors and technologists among them – need to recognise collectively that they must adjust to this new reality. They must work with technologists, entrepreneurs and grassroots non-profits across the developing world to accelerate what has become an inevitable shift. If not, they can continue as they are, and become increasingly irrelevant.

Keywords

mobile technology, m4d, ICT4d, disruptive development, FrontlineSMS, Social Mobile's Long Tail, local entrepreneurs

Introduction

Just over ten years ago I was preparing for my first ever piece of work in mobile technology (widely known simply as 'mobile'). This entailed two years of work which would lead to the development of an innovative conservation news service in 2003, called [wildlive!](#) It also led to the release of one of the earliest reports (Banks & Burge 2004) [\[PDF\]](#) on the application of mobile technology in conservation and development work. A lot has happened since then, not least an explosion in interest, buzz, excitement – and, yes, hype – and a sense that mobile can be the saviour of, well, everything. Back then you'd likely be able to fit everyone working in mobile-for-development (m4d) into a small café. Today you'd need at least a football stadium. m4d – and its big brother, Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) – have become big business.

Not that I needed more proof of mobile's status at international development's top table, but late last year I attended Vodafone's "Mobile for Good" Summit in London. It was a high-profile affair, and an extremely upbeat one at that. I left with mixed feelings about where m4d is headed.

My five takeaways after a day of talks, debates and demonstrations were:

- 1. Everyone is still excited by the *potential* of mobile**
2. The same projects surface over and over again as proof that mobile works
- 3. Mobile is still largely seen as a solution, not a tool**
4. It's up to 'the developed world' to get mobile working for the poor
- 5. The top-down mindset is alive and well.**

Suffice to say, all of these conclusions troubled me as I sat on the train home.

The need for local solutions

I've been thinking for some time about the future of m4d, and how far we've got over the past ten years or so. I've written frequently about the opportunities mobile technology offers the development community, and my fears that we may end up missing a golden opportunity (see my blog "[Time to eat our own dog food?](#)" from March 2009). I've long been a champion of platforms, and understanding how we might build tools for problem-owners to take and deploy on their own terms. Yes, we should provide local entrepreneurs and grassroots non-profits with tools – and where appropriate and requested, with expertise – but we shouldn't develop solutions to problems we don't understand. We shouldn't take ownership of a problem that isn't ours, and we certainly shouldn't build things thousands of miles away and then jump on a plane in search of a home for them.

But this is still, on the whole, what seems to be happening. And this, I'm beginning to believe, is rapidly becoming ICT4D's "inconvenient truth".

A fulfilled future for ICT4D (of which m4d is an increasingly dominant part) is not the one I see playing out today. Its future is not in the hands of western corporates or international NGOs meeting in high-profile gatherings, and it's not in our education establishments who keep busy training computer scientists and business graduates in the West to fix the problems of 'others'. The whole development agenda is shifting, and my prediction for the future sees a major disconnect between what 'we' think needs to be done, and what those closest to the problems think needs to be done. Call it "*disruptive development*", if you like. As I told the Guardian in an [interview](#) earlier this month (van Vark 2012):

"The rise of home-grown solutions to development problems will be most crucial in future. That means African software developers increasingly designing and developing solutions to African problems, many of which have previously been tackled by outsiders. This, I think, will be the biggest change in how development is 'done'."

I'm not the only person to be saying this. Many good friends working at the intersection of African development and technology have been doing the same for some time. The real change, and the big difference, is that it's finally happening. A message which was previously given in hope, a message that was previously given out of an inherent belief that there was a better, more respectful and appropriate way of doing things, is now becoming reality. ICT4D is changing, and the balance of power in development is changing with it.

The origins of FrontlineSMS

[FrontlineSMS](#) is a text messaging solution I developed back in 2005, inspired by work in Bushbuckridge, which is now in use by thousands of non-profit organisations in over a hundred countries.

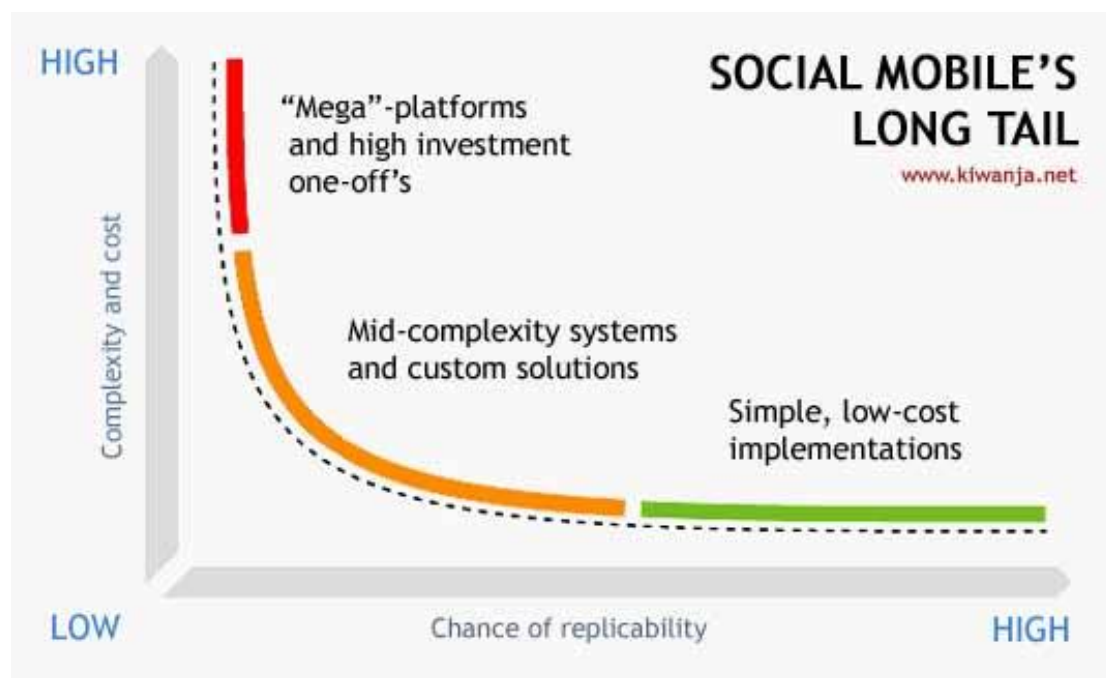
It's always spoken to an approach I've long believed in, one where users are empowered to develop solutions to their own problems. There are many reasons why FrontlineSMS continues to work, but fundamentally it's about what the platform does (and doesn't do). It's about how they really resonate with so many of the innovators, entrepreneurs, non-profits and problem owners that have since deployed it in some shape or form around the world.



Image: Bushbuckridge on the edges of Kruger National Park in South Africa (photo Ken Banks) <http://www.kiwanja.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Bushbuckridge-423.jpg>

Social Mobile's Long Tail

FrontlineSMS was born out of an observation that a large constituency of civil society organisations – mostly smaller grassroots non-profits operating across Africa – were being neglected by the majority of technology solutions providers. Many of these were building high-infrastructure tools that only worked for larger national and international organisations. What I saw happening back then was later visualised in a since much-used diagram, dubbed “Social Mobile's Long Tail”.



Source: <http://www.kiwanja.net/blogpics/socialmobilelongtail.jpg>

Honouring the vibrancy of the local context

From the very beginning, FrontlineSMS trusted its users – relied on them, in fact - to be imaginative and innovative with the platform. If they succeeded, we succeeded. If they failed, we failed. We were all very much in it together. At FrontlineSMS, we focus on the people and not the technology, because it's people who own the problems, and by default they're often the ones best-placed to solve them. When you lead with *people*, technology is relegated to the position of being a *tool*. Our approach to empowering our users isn't rocket science. As I've written [many times before](#), it's usually quite subtle, but it works:

*My belief is that users don't want **access** to tools – they want to be **given** the tools. There's a subtle but significant difference. They want to have **their own** system, something which works with **them** to solve **their** problem. They want to **see** it, to have it **there** with them, not in the “[cloud](#)”. This may sound petty – people wanting something of their own – but I believe that this is one way that works.*

Others are coming round to the importance of keeping a distance, and keeping tools general, appropriate and flexible at a local level. As the Guardian put it in their [recent article](#), “As open-source technology for mobile platforms, innovations like FrontlineSMS are essentially a blank canvas for grassroots organisations to apply to any local context”. There is no doubt that this has been critical to its success.

Today, this local context is becoming increasingly vibrant as university students across Africa graduate with Computer Science and Business Management degrees. Innovation hubs are [springing up across the continent](#), meeting a growing, insatiable demand for places to meet, work and network with like-minded problem-solvers and entrepreneurs. [Investors are now launching funds](#) which show that they're starting to take young African tech start-ups seriously.

This activity hasn't escaped the notice of big business. Google, IBM, Microsoft, Nokia, Hewlett Packard and Samsung have been opening offices across the continent, snapping up much of the talent in the process (ironically often at the expense – and despair – of locally-based NGOs). But while technology businesses take note and develop local capacity that enables them to develop more appropriate local solutions, the broader development 'community' seem trapped in an older mindset of technology transfer.

Local technology transfer is big business

Technology transfer, of course, is big business. There's no shortage of donor money out there for projects that seek to implement the latest and greatest proven Western innovations in a development context, and there are countless tens of thousands of jobs that keep the whole machine running. A lot has to change if the development community is to face up to all its new realities. Yet it's looking more likely that the destiny of the discipline lies in the hands of the very people it originally set out to help.

So, if the future of ICT4D is not university students, NGOs or business graduates devising solutions in labs and hubs thousands of miles away from their intended users, what is it?

Well, how about something a little more like this?

The 'new ICT4D'

In a recent TVE television series called "Life Apps", software developers and technology entrepreneurs in several developing countries were challenged to build solutions to a number of problems affecting communities in their country. In Kenya, for example, a local technology entrepreneur went by bus to chat with a rural farmer and his family. In the process of learning about their challenges, he introduced them to the notion of their supply chain, and then developed an app that would help the farmer market his products. This created benefits for a much wider constituency than just the farmer and his family. While this locally-driven approach may seem rather obvious, it is actually a major departure from what has normally happened in the past. It generated a 'local-local' solution, using local expertise, and did so as part of a neighbour-to-neighbour approach that probably neither the entrepreneur nor farmer saw as 'development'.

Imagine what might be possible if this approach became the "new ICT4D". You can see more of the fascinating TV series which linked local technologists to local problems on the [TVE website](#). There's a lot that's right with this approach, particularly if you consider what would usually happen (hint: it involves aeroplanes).

This is important because one of the many difficulties that members of the international development community come up against is their lack of local awareness, and a reluctance to challenge their own assumptions about what needs to be done. I remember when I first arrived in Nigeria in 2002 for a one year spell running a primate sanctuary in Cross River State. As I got more and more involved in environmental and primate conservation at the local level, I was amazed to learn that there were children living in nearby villages who had never seen wildlife - something I'd never contemplated before. African children who had never seen wildlife? There was also no concept of extinction in many of the local languages. I think I learnt more about the realities of primate conservation during my time in Nigeria than I'd ever do studying the subject at a UK university. Many of my assumptions proved wrong.

My inconvenient truth

Many of my predictions also prove wrong, but it is that time of year, after all, and it is my ten year anniversary in mobile. So here's a biggie.

Development is changing, powered by accessible and affordable liberating technologies and an emerging army of determined, local talent. This local talent is gradually acquiring the skills, resources and support it needs to take back ownership of many of its problems. The reason they hadn't done this before is because those very skills and resources were simply not available to them.

Well, now they are. The ICT4D community – education establishments, donors and technologists among them – collectively need to recognise that they must adjust to this new reality. They need to work with technologists, entrepreneurs and grassroots non-profits across the developing world to accelerate what has become an inevitable shift. If they don't, they can continue as they are, and become increasingly irrelevant. "Innovate or die" doesn't just apply to the technologies plied by the ICT4D community. It applies to the ICT4D community itself.

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About the author

Ken Banks, founder of kiwanja.net, devotes himself to the application of mobile technology for positive social and environmental change, and has spent the last two decades working on projects in Africa. His early research resulted in the development of FrontlineSMS, an award-winning text message communication system today powering thousands of social change projects in over one hundred countries around the world.

Following a management transition at FrontlineSMS in mid-2012, Ken has been focusing on a new project, 'Means of Exchange', which looks at how everyday technologies can be used to democratise opportunities for economic self-sufficiency, rebuild local community and promote a return to local resource use.

Ken is also well known for his writing and blogging on Africa, technology and innovation. When he's not working, Ken spends much of his time being bossed around by his young son, Henry. Further details of Ken's work are available on his website at www.kiwanja.net

Locally-led community development in Africa

Steve Perry



When your work is to help poor and marginalised people improve their livelihood options, realising that the country sits on a treasure trove of resources fundamentally changes the discourse. This article shares what happened when CARE opened up its planning process in Moçambique to be as inclusive as possible, and learned that pulling up many more seats to the strategy table also brought in fundamentally new thinking about options.

Keywords

'yes, and ... thinking', the CARE program approach, the Devonshire Initiative, plausibility structures

The evolution of CARE's involvement in Moçambique

CARE International began working in Moçambique in 1986, 11 years after independence from Portugal. This was in the middle of a devastating internal conflict that lasted from 1975 to 1992 which affected 40% of the population. In the 20 years since the war ended, the country has travelled a long way, and things have changed dramatically both for international organisations and foreign donors who have been a key support.

Major international donors now directly assist Moçambique's national budget and are moving towards a new relationship premised on a partnership with its government. Financing is clearly and transparently linked to performance and country ownership of priorities. This radical shift of emphasis profoundly affects both international organisations such as CARE, which had relied on donors directly to fund its projects and support its work, and foreign donor governments which had become used to a prominent status in national decision-making. Now, in Moçambique's fast growing economy, international investors also want a voice. Huge private sector investments are being made in infrastructure, agro-industries and resource extraction with numerous "mega projects" in bio-fuels, natural gas, coal, titanium and aluminium. Chinese companies have become major partners.

Accordingly, in order to remain relevant as a partner in its development efforts over the next twenty years, international non-government organisations like CARE International need to think much differently about their role. This is the context within which the following strategy process took place.

Channelling energy in the right direction

Development workers are passionately committed. Their convictions about 'right' and 'wrong' are implicit and deeply held. CARE's mission to serve individuals and families in the world's poorest communities means that its people are confronted daily with poverty and social injustice. While channelling this energy is exciting, it also makes thinking about strategy challenging on three levels.

First, work in the international NGO sector itself is being questioned as never before. This is very unsettling for professionals who are more accustomed to *criticising* than being criticised. *Second*, the daunting complexity of what social and economic development is trying to achieve is becoming ever clearer. Far from simple cause-and-effect relationships ('your village is thirsty so it needs a well') development works within a web of non-linear relationships between different and increasingly global players, technical questions and deeply entrenched socio-cultural overlays. Organisations like CARE must be smart enough to deal simultaneously with all these variables so as to facilitate the best possible outcomes. *Third*, as the nature of this complexity sinks in, strategic thinkers must accept that the discussion inevitably extends beyond any single contributor's experience. This can lead to unsettling discussions, as neither the answers nor even the right questions are entirely clear. Open source thinking – call it the 'yes, and ...' approach – is incredibly useful in such an ambiguous and complex context. The trick is to channel the participants' commitment to social justice into new ways of tackling the problem.

Recognising that the question has become more complicated

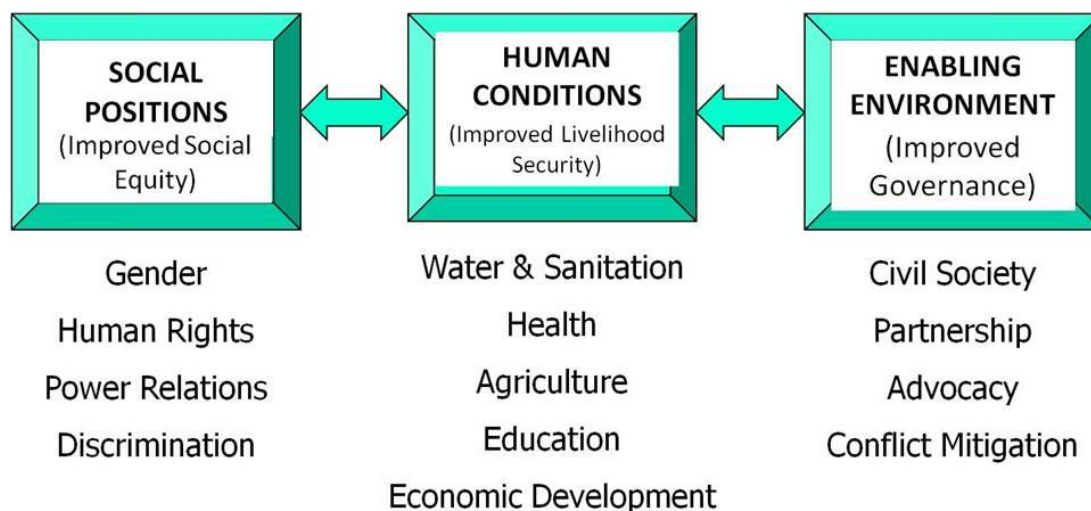
Remaining relevant as a contributor to development processes in poor countries requires international organisations to think through carefully how their roles complement those of other actors. What is the basic problem that needs addressing? What contribution adds the greatest value? How does this fit with the work of others?

CARE uses a unifying framework that looks at wider social, political, cultural and human needs in designing its program approach (see Figure 1 below). It encourages its development agents to study their context much more comprehensively than in the past. Rather than addressing just the *symptoms* of poverty and social injustice – such as supplying the water system to the thirsty village – CARE's planning approach urges its people and their allies to look for the *underlying causes* in the wider social, economic, environmental and legal contexts.

While Moçambique ran for decades just to catch up, it is now reaching a stage where, for example, the lack of a community water supply cannot be simply 'fixed' by sinking a well. Questions now need to be addressed that may have been overlooked in the past when the needs were so great: Who will own the well? Who benefits from it in a context characterised by elite capture? Who should maintain it? Who collects the water? Is the well in the right place? Is there a risk of the water getting polluted?

The responses to such questions become even more complicated when other aspects of the human condition are factored in. For example, what if the community needs not only water, but also education, health, food production and other aspects of improved livelihood security?

Figure 1: CARE's 'unifying framework' for determining underlying causes of development issues



Contributory dialogue – ‘yes, and...’ thinking – is well adapted for such discussions, because it requires facilitating an approach that leads participants towards a more complicated analysis that is beyond any one technical best practice. CARE’s strategy process is intended to pull together enough chairs around the table to enable engineers to sit down with nutritionists and nurses and educators and conservationists. When everyone is nudged out of their individual comfort zones, this necessitates a facilitation process that creates a ‘safe space’ so participants with widely varying backgrounds can contribute a wide range of perspectives.

Acknowledging diversity and power through a process of contributory dialogue

Just as it is necessary to include a broad range of expertise around the table, broad and equitable participation is also essential. This can be difficult to achieve in small organisations trying to fulfil multiple mandates on a shoestring budget which struggle to achieve diversity and inclusion. NGOs rarely have the luxury of putting several staff with similar profiles together to work on the same team. Increasingly partnerships are used by development organisations as a way of amplifying impact. And it is critical in a true partnership to fully involve both parties.

A common model for international development assistance is that a supporter (a ‘donor’) offers resources to achieve certain results. This creates both an important relationship of accountability between the donor and the doer, and also a power imbalance. If the recipient organisation wants the money, it must respond fully to the donor’s expectations, which may differ somewhat from the organisation’s perspectives or priorities. The chilling effect can be similar when international NGOs turn to a government donor for funding or when small local organisations depend on international NGOs for support. Community groups may have to subscribe to particular targeting policies or state publicly their alignment with the positions advocated by the NGO from whom they hope to receive money.

But the money question is only one factor in why representing a range of opinions in community development strategy may be difficult. Differences in the participants’ education, life experience and major language disparities make it difficult for everyone to get equal ‘air’ time. Internationally-employed personnel who often have decades of experience working in many countries may race out in front of those whose experience has been gained locally, or make complex leaps in reasoning that, while making sense to them,

may require time and patience to explain within a local context. While Moçambican staff may not be as eloquent in this ‘foreign language’, they understand how their local society works. Marrying these indigenous, local insights with new, externally suggested ways of doing things is critical for a successful strategy, and is the essence of contributory dialogue. The key is finding a method that makes everyone feel confident about making contributions and listened to.

Unknown unknowns

Finally, the fast-changing social and economic context introduces many of what Donald Rumsfeld famously called ‘unknown unknowns’. When CARE first started its work in Moçambique, the country was in the midst of a civil war, experiencing desperate poverty and had a very weak human resource base following the abrupt Portuguese disengagement. In that sense, it was a simpler time as there was a need for practically everything and there was operational space and encouragement to work if an organisation could get funding. Today the development landscape has utterly changed. Peace has allowed Moçambique’s resource wealth to be fully exploited for the first time, and this has led to a stampede of private sector investment. And money talks! Very suddenly many new voices have spoken up about development assistance. It seems that their voices, their money and often their very blunt solutions are arriving just at the moment when international NGOs and donors are recognising how inter-connected and nuanced the issues are. Their ideas of ‘profit’ or ‘return on investment’ are as perplexing to development NGOs as a gender analysis might be to a mining company. This situation calls for serious ‘yes, and...’ thinking, if such business interests are to be incorporated into a ‘win-win’ discourse.

The ‘yes, and ...’ process we followed

CARE’s work in Moçambique sprawls from the far north of the country to the head office in Maputo - about a two and a half hour flight. See figure 2. Because of bad roads (and expensive air travel) personnel in various field offices work largely in isolation from each other, and their approaches have evolved over time in different ways and technical focuses. So it was important to build into the strategy process a way for people to come together, improve their mutual understanding and build trust. We were also wary of creating a process that would be dominated by senior international staff. Quite intentionally, the invitations to participate were sent to a majority of front-line people, including staff members from the small local partner organisations supported by CARE. We also wanted the engagement of CARE International members. So you can imagine that the final mix of about twenty participants was a very diverse group.

Figure 1 CARE’s offices in Moçambique



Pre-work

Pre-work began well before the formal strategy discussion. These conversations revolved around the question of *who* CARE wanted to impact. You start from where you are at, and CARE Moçambique's experience was with three broad categories of people: infants and children, adolescent girls, and women. A team leader was named for each of these three demographic clusters and given the job of developing the first draft of situational analyses. As the Moçambican development assistance community (including CARE!) had already produced stacks of reports, a big challenge was for the team leaders to synthesise and consolidate the wealth of information available.

Filtering

Digesting data related to these three groups was done differently by each of the three team leaders. One produced a deck of slides brimming with statistical analysis; another developed an emotional presentation focusing on injustice and rights; the third presented strategic thinking that was already fairly well advanced. The idea was to use this pre-work as a starting point in analysing underlying causes of poverty and social injustice so that the group could 'unpack' the issues in a more thorough manner.

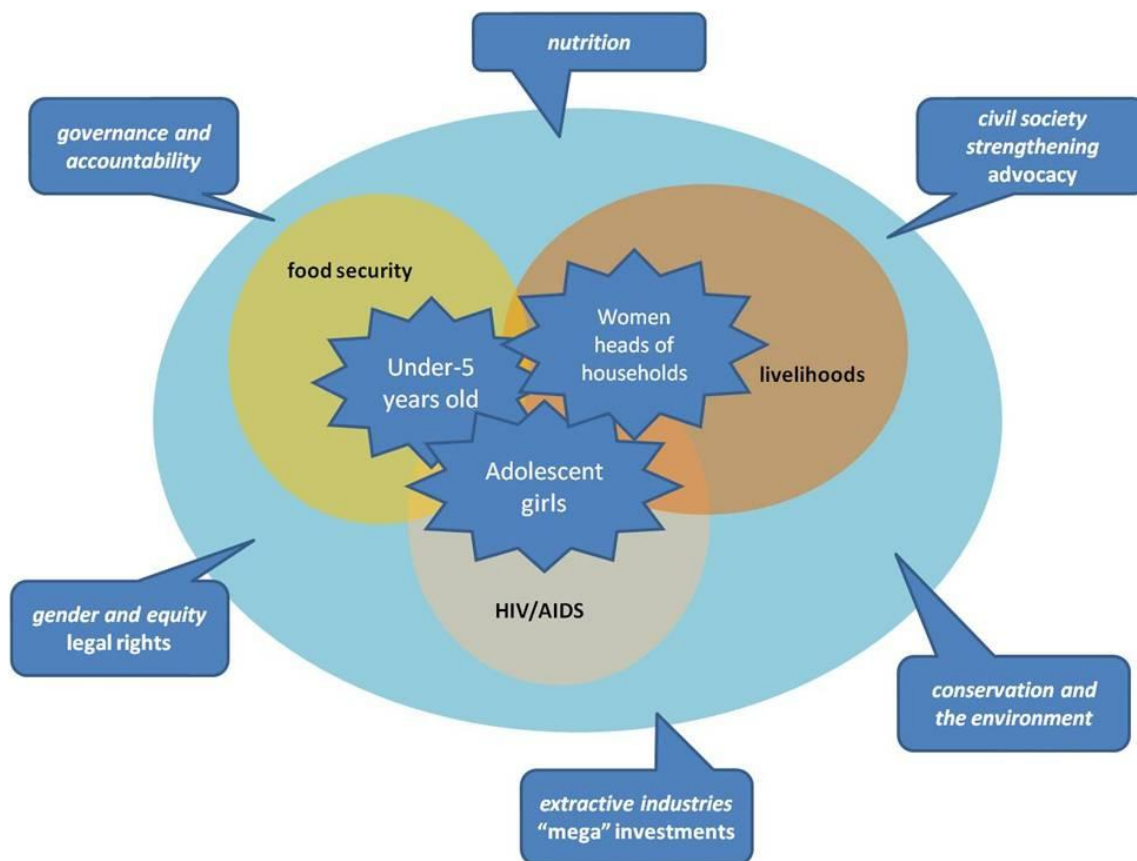
Although this pre-work began where CARE was at in its thinking, we recognised that other doors needed to be opened pretty widely to let in new ideas and perspectives. We invited half a dozen outside 'experts' to share their work in areas as diverse as accountability and corruption, to why Moçambique has some of the world's worst nutrition indicators. See figure 3. These presentations came first, at the start of the process. Although in many cases their content was quite disturbing, we felt it was important to include this commentary on the much broader social and economic situation in Moçambique, rather than first focusing on CARE's work in Moçambique.

A great deal of background was presented fast, and not all of it was delivered in Portuguese. As our participants joined the discussion from many different backgrounds, a tactic was necessary to keep the group cohesive and focused. All the participants were armed with a pen and a pad of large adhesive notes. Prior to each presentation, everyone was reminded to 'listen for the problems' or issues that needed to be addressed. Quiet time was given after each speaker was finished for individuals to capture what they took away from the presentation.

Over a day and a half, our group was bombarded by data from every direction. Some of these analyses were 'owned' by the group in the sense that they had contributed to the analysis earlier. Other presentations were made by expert partners, so they represented new – and sometimes very controversial - ideas, as the discussions veered into the realm of politics, legal rights or foreign investment. As we moved along, everyone's collection of notes grew thicker. After each instalment, we paused to reflect: what were the key issues?

Our assumption was that while everyone listened to the same inputs, they would prioritise them differently in their heads, infusing different meanings into what was being said. We wanted to sponge up all these perspectives and crowd-source the analysis.

Figure 2 The main issues presented



The final three presentations were made by the team leaders themselves about their three 'impact groups'. By this point – after so many presentations – the group was more cohesive, having journeyed through hours of discussion about the issues facing Moçambique today. Sharing the group's own collective experience and analysis really helped ideas converge. Following each team leader's presentation, once more we jotted our answers to the question on sticky notes: what are the key issues?

Three big walls

After lunch on the second day, everyone was ready to stop listening and start talking themselves. Earlier the team leaders had helped mix participants into three small, balanced six-person groups, paying careful attention to technical background, hierarchy, gender, language and personality. Each group focused on a different one of the three 'impact groups'.

Each group's first task was to organise the thick collection of key issues that each member had noted during the presentations. In three different rooms, against three different walls, the 'yes, and...' conversations took place using the issue cards as a point of departure. The groups were offered several tools as a framework. *First* it was suggested that some key issues are the *cause* of a problem, while others might be the *consequence*. Taking the water supply example, the village might have no safe water because it has no protected source (a cause) which resulted in many more cases of diarrhoeal disease (a consequence).

Second we proposed that the issues could be also organised graphically around the three domains of change in CARE's conceptual framework (see Figure 1 above). That is, some issues might relate to social

position, such as how women are treated in Moçambique. Other issues might relate to policy or legal issues. And still others might reflect the absence of a specific unmet human need, such as water or health care.

This turned out to be a very energising step. Despite this complicated analysis is (each small group member might have 50 ideas to contribute), it became a great collective project. Is the idea a cause or a consequence? Is it a social issue or something missing in the enabling environment? 'Yes, and ... here is something else we need to add...' so new cards appeared (in addition to the stacks everyone already had). Quickly, within just a couple of hours, ideas were consolidated and the complex network analysis was very advanced. As the groups worked on, they were also able to refine how they understood who the impact group was. They were able to label more precisely who it was that 'owned' these problems. Figure 4 below gives an example of the result of this process for the Adolescent Girls Impact Group after about six hours of work.

Figure 3 Synthesis of ideas about the Adolescent Girls Impact Group



A steep learning curve

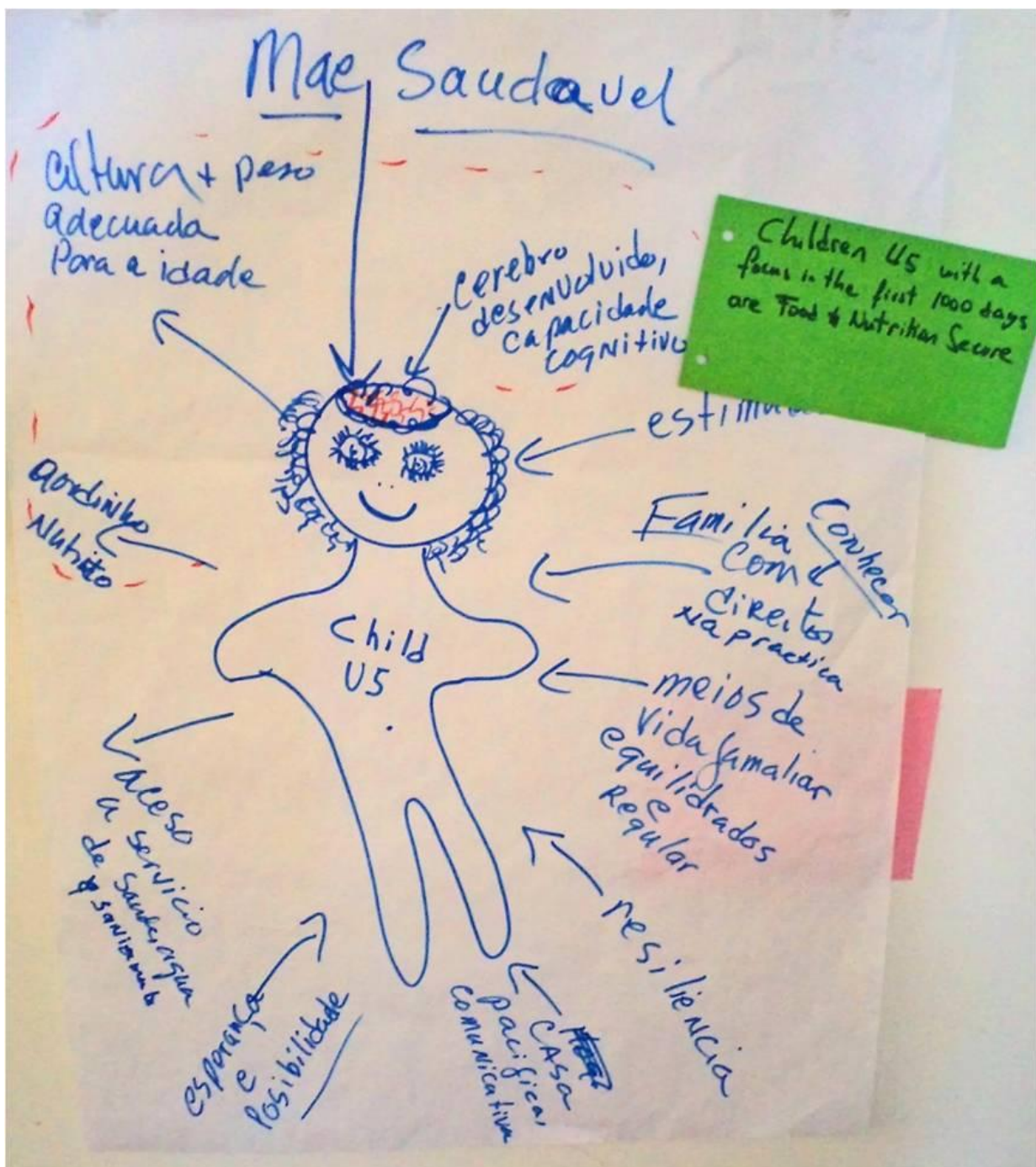
Besides bringing in the issues they had noted during the presentation, everyone also brought into the conversation their own perspectives, experiences and sometimes biases. It is human nature to talk first about what you know best.

Following our open-source approach to analysis, the next morning we resumed with a tour of the three

rooms, so that everyone could see what the others had produced. Each group volunteered a representative Tour Guide to explain to the other groups how their wall was organised and what key issues they had identified. Although this went into some level of detail and very pointed questions were asked, we did not encourage overt public disagreements. We kept the questions just to clarification points, but the visitors were encouraged to spot gaps and similarities, and to leave behind observations or questions or new ideas directly with sticky notes on the wall.

Challenged in this way, when the small groups reconvened, their next task was to reflect on their analysis and the discussion of it, and themselves to put pen to paper and visualise what their goal looked like. Figure 5 below illustrates how this was done for the goal for the Under Five Year Old Impact Group.

Figure 4 Visualising the Under 5 year old goal



Dealing with emerging conflict

At this point, the analysis shifted direction and became somewhat more contentious. When each group was working on their own, they were largely influenced by their collective comfort zones, in which individual members had much experience. The under-5-year-old group, for example, began designing their problem response from a nutritional security angle. Subsequently bringing in other perspectives allowed the group to reconsider issues and reframe the problem. Visitors looking at the analysis wanted the group to include issues about governance, child protection education, and water and sanitation. Exposing the original group analysis to other perspectives forced the group to debate new ideas, to try and say 'yes, and...' However, as this encouragement pushed individual members of the host group outside their respective safe areas, it required a considerable effort to incorporate these new aspects.

An important premise of CARE's approach to program design helped to facilitate a path over this major conceptual hump. In past program design strategies, often the expectation had been to develop a set of activities that your organisation would be responsible for delivering. So if your career background was in the field of water and sanitation, the kinds of solutions you were expected to propose tended to have a heavy emphasis around water and sanitation because this was where you had the most experience.

CARE's current thinking around developing a program strategy is now a lot more inclusive. Recognising that the issues poor communities confront are multi-dimensional, it encourages a broader initial analysis. And then recognising that there are limits to its resources and technical capacity, CARE encourages programmers to look for complementarities with other potential collaborators, deliberately creating a broad alliance of partners to address different aspects of the problem.

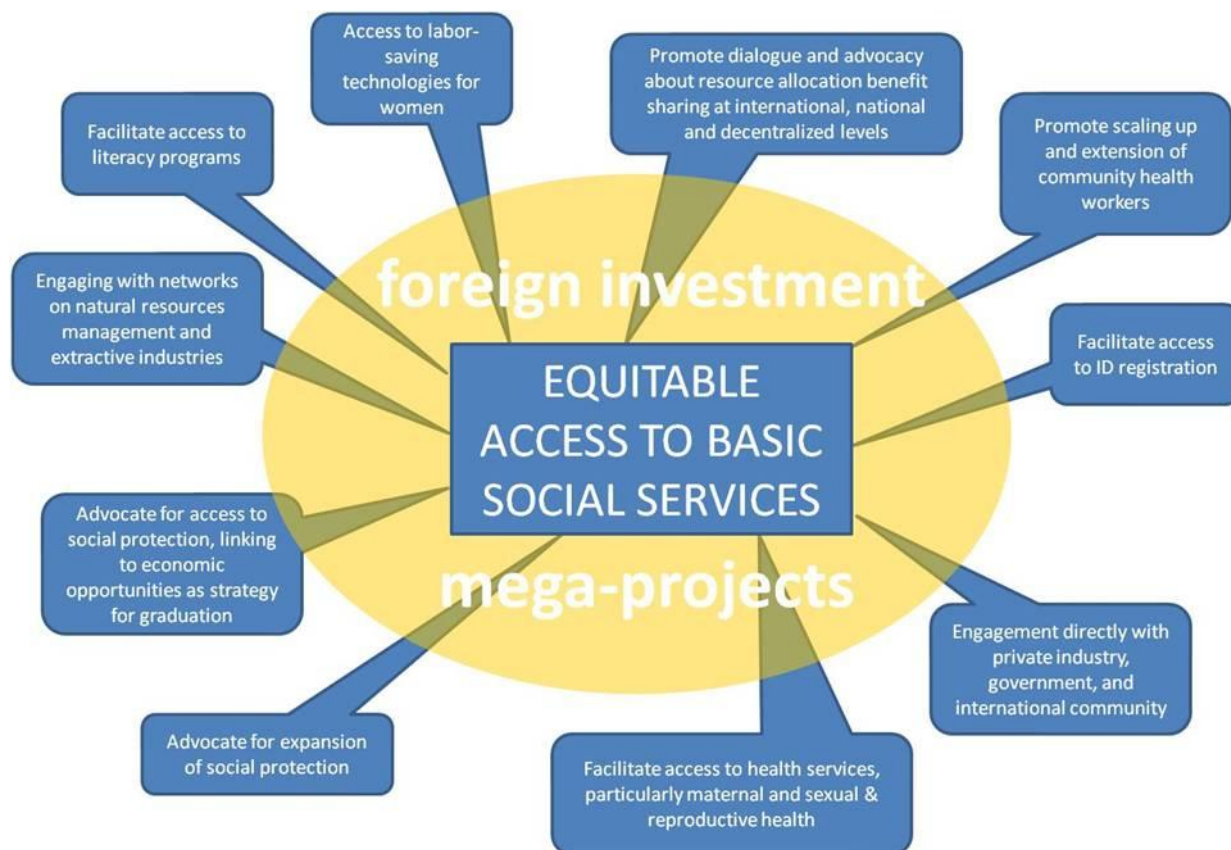
Expanding plausibility structures

With the groups confronted with big, complex analyses, armed only with reassurances that they would not be held personally accountable to solve every aspect of them, the next stage was to sketch out broadly what needed to be done to reach these ambitious program goals. Once again, we emphasised that this *was not* a discussion of what new CARE projects were needed, but rather a much broader one about what the necessary *change areas* were. Our hope was to wipe the slate clean, and talk imaginatively about what really needed to be done to influence the key drivers of poverty and issues we had identified.

This was probably the most difficult exercise of the whole five day process. It surfaced tensions and confusion amongst participants. They understood the world of 'projects', a time-bound set of activities aimed at achieving specific results and carried out in specific, deliberate areas. Moving beyond that, to the idea that various initiatives could fit together and become mutually reinforcing, and furthermore that CARE did not have to 'own' these projects, was a very big step. Essentially we asked people in the room to move beyond the limits of their existing 'plausibility structures' and imagine something he or she had never seen or experienced. In this case, we were asking the staff to consider a bigger solution picture that also included the wider national network of relationships as well as the inputs and outputs of other projects over which we had no direct control.

With this encouragement, the groups began answering the 'what needs to be done' question more abstractly. Figure 5 below shows how one group identified the change pathways within 'equitable access to basic social services' domain of change'.

Figure 5 How one group defined a ‘domain of change’ with the various pathways



Many of the pathways the groups identified were familiar ones, such as improving education and health services or innovations in livelihoods. Other areas were more controversial, and recognised a tangled web of underlying causes. For example, while official government identification is essential for an individual to access social programs in Moçambique, many women, and particularly women heads of households, face many barriers to securing this recognition. The groups also moved towards re-imagining the role of the international NGO away from service delivery and more towards one of facilitation and advocacy.

Some participants became quiet as the discussion took this turn. Their on-the-ground reality is of the staggering magnitude of unmet basic human needs, with very limited local capacity to respond. Quietly, they expressed how uncomfortable they were with taking on this vague and intangible role of advocate, when so much practical intervention was needed. The ‘yes, and...’ response to this unease drew attention to the longer term, and the need to get many more actors involved. Considering the magnitude of the problems in Moçambique, international NGOs like CARE need to find points to leverage their knowledge of proven local solutions, so that they can be addressed by others. Far from calling a halt, this was really a call for working more effectively in wider networks and coalitions. And the recognition that the big money in Moçambique was coming in from the private sector helped to reframe CARE’s role, as suddenly all the resources it could muster were relatively trivial compared to all this new investment.

Where do we go from here?

An ironic outcome of this type of strategy exercise is that it generates extra work for everyone. Rather than providing neat conclusions and solutions – at least in the short-run – a process like this, which deliberately opens up many new avenues of thinking, generates more questions than answers. Having recognised the most important domains of change, the Impact Group teams immediately began mapping out potential partners and allies they needed to begin reaching out to. A lot of work remained to fit together the three program areas into a more coherent whole.

One step in this direction was a series of conversations with other CARE offices. Some had participated directly in this program strategy process, and for them it was useful discussing with them how they understood the implications and risks. The insight about the impact of the mega-projects opened a new dimension to the discussion with other CARE members. Giant corporations with home bases all over the world were now important investors in Moçambique's development. Whereas previously the only major expectation from CARE member offices was fundraising, the 'yes, and ...' thinking in this program strategy process identified quite a new role for those offices. CARE Canada is a member of the Devonshire Initiative, a mining industry/NGO forum which aims to improve social and community development outcomes wherever Canadian mining companies operate overseas. Other CARE members have similar private sector engagements. Discussion forums like this one provide a ready channel for sharing promising practices in a constructive way. This is well beyond the traditional scope of the so-called North-South relationship between member offices in CARE - truly 'many voices, one movement'. The facilitation of Moçambique's program planning process working with 'yes, and ...' principles offered a fantastic opportunity to find these connections, linkages and possibilities for collaboration.

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About the author

Steve is a Certified Professional Facilitator based in Geneva, Switzerland. Over the course of over twenty years living in Accra Ghana, Addis Ababa Ethiopia, Kathmandu Nepal, Sucre Bolivia, Dhaka Bangladesh and Khaling Bhutan, Steve has worked extensively with NGOs, UN agencies, donor organisations and the private sector on strategy questions relating to community development issues. He appreciates feedback and new ideas, and can be contacted at marsteve@marsteve.net.

Civic engagement: building participatory democracy, one project at a time

Tim Merry

Photographs by Kathleen Condon and Marguerite Drescher



This is the first in what I hope will be a series of articles on what I have learned from leading civic engagement and public consultation processes. Here, I explore the purpose and one of the core principles of authentic engagement - trust. In following articles, I will discuss the remaining principles, the roles involved, our organising concept, and a strategic design framework our team has developed here in Nova Scotia.

This is not simple work. It takes courage to stand in the maelstrom of many pressures, opinions and agendas and keep following the inner clarity of one's integrity. I have chosen to work in this field because I learn a huge amount about myself. Along the way, we get to have a try at healing one of the most critical fragmentations in our society – namely the breakdown of trust between those who make decisions and those who are affected by them. I hope you enjoy and find useful what I have written. It has certainly helped me to write it.

Keywords

civic engagement, trust, participatory leadership, public participation, Art of Hosting, societal transformation

New beginnings

This is the age of participation. The life cycle of command and control, centralised, hierarchical leadership is sunsetting as our default problem-solving paradigm. Our current reality is too rapidly changing, diverse and information saturated for small groups of leaders or experts to make decisions that effectively meet the needs of large numbers of people. When you throw in economic and environmental uncertainty and the social unrest we are experiencing all over the world, it becomes even more apparent that our dominant culture of leadership must shift to meet the needs of the people and the times we are living in. We need leaders who build relationships and trust rather than fragmentation and fear.

This change in leadership mindset and practice is already underway. Thirteen years ago I was lucky enough to be part of the founding of the Art of Hosting training and community. This has become a global network of practitioners that has moved from the fringe to being part of multiple large scale mainstream transformation projects in all sectors worldwide. The Art of Hosting is about applying participatory leadership to some of the most overwhelming challenges of our times. Rather than calling the experts to solve our problems, the Art of Hosting offers a suite of mental models, methods and personal practices to bring all those affected by a situation together in conversation to find a way forward everyone owns and is ready to act upon.



I have been working with participatory leadership for many years but only in the last few years have I begun to see civic engagement as a key leverage area for positive social change. It began in a conversation with a leader from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation at Art of Hosting training in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He told me the story of how, for fifteen years, scientists have been attempting to discover the core protein at the heart of the AIDS virus. In an attempt to accelerate the

process, the Gates Foundation funded an online game that allowed people from all over the world to participate in the research. It took only 3 weeks for the core protein to be identified. During the same period, I was hearing stories of companies that outsourced their research to public forums and made massive advances in their business development and huge growth in their profits.

I realised that my work of hosting was ready to take a next step. It was time to combine the expertise I had developed in participatory process design with the knowledge of leaders in other fields of collaboration such as gaming, social media, design thinking and street engagement. We could create products for societal transformation together that none of us could design alone. This massively influenced how my team and I delivered our first civic engagement for the New Halifax Public Library, combining participatory events, creative street engagement and online interactive platforms to coherently surface public voice to influence decision makers. Big questions began to form as I considered the future of this type of work:

What if we could authentically make visible the collective voice of people from across a city, region or nation?

How could we make that collective voice visible in such a way it would transform public realm conversation?

What would it mean to strategically direct that voice to impact political platforms, the economic elite and civil society leaders?

How would the capacity to authentically make visible public voice through civic engagement transform the very nature of modern democracy?



What is the purpose of civic engagement and public consultation?

These founding questions have led me to re-examine previous work in a new light and deliberately seek out and accept work whose core is civic engagement. Some of this work has included the transformation of Nova Scotia Public Health through multiple citizen and stakeholder events, public engagement for major developments like the Nova Centre in Halifax, and societal projects such as AuditFutures in the UK.



When I talk to potential clients and partners about an engagement process I say the purpose is:

“A highly responsive and participatory interface between the caller(s), the stakeholders and the public”.

This is about thinning the gap between those who make decisions and those who are affected by them. It is about designing processes, platforms and portals for information to move swiftly and effectively. Decision makers are then able to integrate the needs and desires of the public and stakeholders into their planning. In turn, the public and stakeholders are able to access important information that supports and transforms conversations in the public realm and elsewhere. The more effectively decision makers can respond to real needs, the more they build trust and credibility and the more we all end up with a product, service, building or strategy we are happy with.

Equally, the more informed the public and stakeholder debate becomes, the less room there is for ungrounded assumptions to take over from the actual content. All too often engagement is hijacked by hype or lobbyists and the public loses the opportunity to influence and change the content that is actually on the table. It has been a remarkable transformation for government leaders and private sector developers to realise that they can come out of a public engagement process looking good. It has also been inspiring to see citizens' faith in their capacity to influence change grow as engagement processes unfold.

This is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the potential of this work. I articulate the purpose of engagement to myself as:

“To make visible the collective intelligence of a region in such a way that it transforms civic culture and leadership platforms ... so that the directionality of society is re-located into the hands of citizens”.



I believe we are on the cusp of having the processes and technologies to be able to surface the patterns of public opinion in such a way that it can become the compass for how decisions are made. This for me is the exciting potential of public engagement work. It has embedded in its DNA a fundamental shift in leadership from the cult of the charismatic individual, to society being driven by the collective voice of its people. This is a fundamental re-location of power to where it belongs. Authentic engagement builds by default a civic culture of collaborative problem solving where people step up to solve their own problems. Leadership becomes more about creating the conditions for people's success rather than telling people what success looks like. If we can amplify the small success we are having now in surfacing public voice, I feel there is potential to transform modern democracy through how it engages its citizens. Now that is a long term purpose I am ready to work for.

What are the principles and conditions that create authentic civic engagement?

Twelve core principles need to be in place and clear to all the key people involved in public engagement work. If these are not tended to, the quality of the engagement begins to dip and the credibility of the work can become undermined. We have learned these principles through doing the work and learning along the way with a dedicated team of entrepreneurs and change agents:

- Build trust
- Make visible the full spectrum of opinion and perspective
- Engage a broad and diverse demographic and geography
- Listen for recurring patterns that are reflective of the collective intelligence
- Integrate expert input, interactive conversations, arts, social media and tangible experience
- Build community and raise civic pride
- Be responsive to what is happening in the community, online and what is in the media
- The proof is in the pudding: people must see themselves in the results
- Create compelling messaging, invitation and branding
- Share the necessary information for informed public debate
- Honesty, transparency and authenticity at all levels
- Create just enough order for the inevitable chaos to be meaningful and productive

I began this article thinking I could go through all of these principles (citing examples) and then move onto what we have learned about the people needed, the process design, and the strategy involved. The more I wrote, the more I realised I had to say. I was writing a book, not an article! For the purposes of this article, I have chosen to focus on the core principle that I think knits it all together, the societal acupuncture point of civic engagement work: trust.

Whatever we do in our engagement work must build trust, not further erode it. In the 13 years I have been working locally and internationally in the field of systems change, there has been a recurring theme in the work: the fundamental breakdown of trust between decision makers and those affected by their decisions, whether that be in our political systems, corporate structures or civil society initiatives. I believe healing this rift is at the heart of building more inclusive, relevant and resilient democracies.

However, the history of engagement has been so riddled with badly run process and manipulated information sharing that not only has citizen trust in decision makers broken down (and vice versa) but the faith in the process of civic engagement itself has been undermined. Any action we take must re-build this trust in each other and the process of engagement or it is not worth doing.



Building trust at the core

Trust has to be practised at the core of the project. The quality of trust and relationship among the core players will play out across the public engagement as a whole. Civic engagement work is inherently unpredictable. When chaos strikes, as it inevitably will, it will begin to come apart at the seams if solid trusting relationships do not exist at the centre of the project. Strategic alliance is not enough to run a good engagement.

When my team and I were deciding if we would go ahead with the Nova Centre engagements in Halifax, I met with the developer and we began to discuss possibilities. The entrepreneur in me began to get very excited at the potential for us to take our work to a next level and the positive impact we could have on the downtown and the culture of conversation in our city. I left the meeting with my head buzzing with ideas and pulled together a first draft of the engagement plan. There was solid government partnership at all three levels, he was willing to give us the freedom to do our work and there was a budget large enough to make it possible for me to bring my full team. Then my doubts began to kick in: I hardly knew this man, maybe they were just giving us enough rope to hang ourselves, was I a pawn in a bigger political game?

My reputation as someone to be trusted in hosting civic engagement is only good if I am able to stand between the public and the decision makers and host the relationship and information exchange impartially. As soon as I become aligned with any one person or group, I lose the credibility to bring everyone together. I remembered how transformative it was for me when the architect of the Halifax Library said: “for the first time in my career of designing public buildings, the public became my client”. The next time I met with the Nova Centre developer, several things happened that gave me the confidence to proceed with the project.

We began our meeting with a very candid conversation. I told him that my reputation and future in this work was dependent on his capacity to deliver in response to public input. What builds trust in a decision maker, a process and an engagement facilitator is when people see their collective opinions reflected in the results. He looked me right in the eye and assured me that he wanted us all to come out of this with our reputations and integrity intact. I felt his sincerity; these were not just words to be spoken but something he believed. I could also see this reflected in the team he had around him. They all trusted each other as friends. This gave me the confidence that he knew how to be in trusting relationship to me and by extension to the public. If I had not felt this kind of clarity I would not have proceeded, no matter how tempting the opportunity.

Secondly, we talked about the contract and who was my client. We named both of the sponsors of the engagement, the developer and the government, and we also named the public as my clients. Contractually now I was bound to serve all the key stakeholders equally. This was the first time I had been able to make the public part of the written contractual agreement for public engagement work. It spoke to me of the developer’s willingness to trust my team, our process and the public voice. True to his word, the developer completely re-designed his building based on the ongoing outcomes of the six-month public engagement, scrapping previous designs from earlier in the project.

I cannot move on from this section without acknowledging the incredible quality of relationships among my team. The friendships we had built over previous projects gave us the ground to withstand the initial public storm of this work. It reinforced for me that the only way to sustain social innovation is by working with people you trust, anything less cannot withstand the pressure of tensions, speed of learning and exhilaration of success without become a battleground for egos.

The combination of trust with the developer, within my team and with government decision makers created a deep and strong foundation for our work. Without these relationships, I do not believe we would have been able to so successfully navigate the unfolding complexity of this project.

Building trust in the process

Part of the complexity of the Nova Centre engagements was the controversial nature of the development. Many people did not want to see it built, disagreed with the inclusion of a publicly funded convention centre and were very vocal about this online and in the media. We knew we could not ignore this and were ready to invite and engage all voices in the conversation.

Our first public event was billed as a ‘Town Hall’ and had been advertised around the question of “Nova Centre: Where are you at, Halifax?” Inspired by stories from Greece, we put a microphone in the middle of the room, surrounded by concentric circles and gave each speaker a maximum of three minutes. It was a two hour session with an opening from a First Nations elder, followed by three blocks of 10 speakers, and

some closing remarks from the developer. It was a simple process that set the tone for the whole engagement. Multiple perspectives were heard and most importantly, it became clear that all voices were invited, welcome and could have impact. After this, we moved into a series of events working with the World Cafe around the vision for the overall look and feel of the building, design of the public spaces and the Convention Centre. We never shied away from controversy when it arose and always integrated it into our meetings as part of the conversation.



The only way we could credibly stand up and say we had run a good engagement is if we reached out and engaged as many perspectives as possible. Only through the contribution of multiple points of view are we able to piece together a bigger picture of public opinion. People I work with are often very worried about this approach, fearing the events will be hijacked or dominated by nay-sayers. In the face of a hot topic, the natural reaction is to contract and try to control the engagement. In reality, however, this just creates a clearer target and reinforces the cynics' perception of an untrusting process.

My experience has been that the more we broaden the invitation to engage, the less it is possible for any one viewpoint or group to dominate the engagement. The more we honestly make visible all the different opinions, the more we build trust in the process. People start to turn up ready and willing to fully engage. Citizens, as well as decision makers, are tired of public events which are dominated by individual ranters and thus eclipse the broader public opinion.

As a result of the engagement process, the public saw major changes to the Nova Centre integrated into the design such as shifting of parking entrances off a busy entertainment street, an accessible green roof, and all season outdoor performance space. Throughout the process, the patterns of public opinion were constantly reflected back into the public realm. We used art and information on the fences, online downloadable summaries and video, social media feeds and posts and street-based outreach activities. People saw the design evolve in response to what they were saying. This built trust in the process and created a turnaround in public opinion about the building and the decision makers involved.

The Nova Centre public engagement is one example of good process leading to good results. It led our community from a place of doubt and scepticism to one of shared trust and collaborative city building. Together, the public shaped the Nova Centre. The process has demonstrated the clear value of citizen participation in the decisions and initiatives that impact them. Just like the developer said: "This is a better project than we had before we embarked on the consultation."

Looking ahead



My greatest hope is that civic engagement projects, such as the Nova Centre and the Halifax Central Library, move us closer to healing the fragmented relationships between our decision makers and those most affected by their decisions. I also hope that they further the culture of civic conversation across our region and create powerful stories of how the courage to trust can lead to concrete visible change around us. This is work that is local in its action but global in its consequences.

Authentic engagement is proved, one project at a time, as a source of good governance and business practice. Every project is a brick in the foundation of a participatory democracy that is rooted in the needs of its people, rather than the egos of isolated leaders.

Ultimately, the civic engagement work has generated important insights for me as a host and facilitator of process. I believe today's complexity and uncertainty demands we bring together multiple diverse perspectives to work on the major issues facing us in and among our communities, organisations and nations. The role of the host or facilitator is to create the conditions for all these perspectives to come together, build relationships and surface clarity and strategy that transcends and includes all viewpoints. This is the type of leadership that is at the centre of facilitating civic engagement projects.

If I am willing to step into this role, I must let go of outcome and allegiance to any cause or perspective. Attachment to a particular result limits the reality of what is actually happening among people and therefore my capacity to respond meaningfully. Alignment with any particular cause or perspective undermines my capacity to facilitate the conversation impartially for all the different people involved. As soon as I take a stand for one perspective, I have lost the trust of the others to host a good conversation. My experience is that this takes an incredible commitment to letting go and being in the moment. I am constantly challenged to shed my ideas of what is right and wrong and be with what is. This is a practice of personal trust in myself and in people's inherent goodness and wisdom.

I believe this is true, not just for facilitators but for anyone interested in leading change. The very nature of change, innovation and transformation is that you do not know the outcome is ahead of time. The only way I have found to be in this kind of unknowing is to be with people I trust. If I am in relationships of trust, I am

learning, and if I am learning, life has meaning and impetus into action. Life itself becomes vibrant. It is the trust in our personal relationships that create results we can trust in the world. I think Thomas Merton says it best:

"Do not depend on the hope of results ... you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself ... you gradually struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people ... In the end, it is the reality of personal relationship that saves everything." Thomas Merton

No matter how grand the vision and broad the scope of my work it always leads me within myself and to the quality of relationships I have with others. Perhaps it is the grandness of the vision that needs to be surrendered in order to give fully to the work and the people in the moment.

What am I willing to let go of to be in the truth of the work itself and relationships of trust with others?

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Photographs

All photographs in the article were taken during public participation events in Nova Scotia and were taken by Marguerite Drescher of Brave Space, www.bravespace.ca.

The photograph of Tim Merry was taken by Kathleen Condon.

About the author

Tim Merry has more than 13 years of experience locally and internationally in supporting diverse stakeholders to come together to launch, sustain and grow innovative projects and initiatives. His work is rooted in the belief that if we create the right conditions people will organise together and solve their own challenges with surprising ease and effectiveness. He has extensive experience ranging from major international businesses and government agencies to local communities and regional collaboratives.

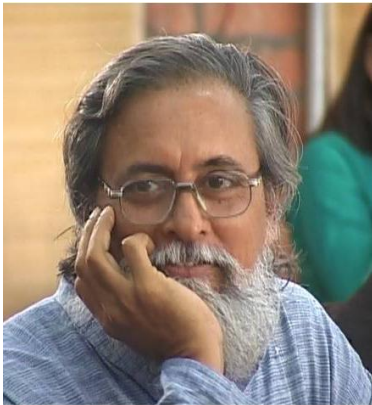
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Recognising, respecting and rewarding oddballs:

Lessons about open innovation from India's Honey Bee Network

Anil K. Gupta and Marianne Esders



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Fertilising the soil that nurtures local innovation

Twenty five years ago, we began our search for local oddballs around the country as a way to find solutions rather than just problems. This search triggered a small paradigmatic shift in our understanding of the development process - to look for resources in which poor people are rich and then use this richness as a building block of future development.

Over the years, the Honey Bee Network has encountered tens of thousands of creative people who solved a local problem or maintained an outstanding traditional knowledge practice that prevented certain problems from arising. Innovations by common people for use by common people thus began the first open innovation platform. Today, the Honey Bee Network database¹⁸ remains the largest pool of attributed, open source, multilingual solutions for everyday problems in agriculture, livestock, farm machinery, human health, food, biodiversity application, and so on.

This article shares lessons we have learned about open innovation and the opportunities it offers for both corporations and ordinary people who are willing to share their knowledge outside their village. We look at a framework of knowledge exchange between the formal and informal sectors, ethical considerations, and factors that influence the willingness to share. We also look at the considerations involved in creating an ecosystem that facilitates mutual interest between formal and informal sectors and helps fertilise the soil that nurtures local innovation.

¹⁸ <http://www.sristi.org/wsa/index.htm>

Two questions that puzzle us

Two questions have often puzzled us. Increasingly we have wondered why billions spent on aid and so-called participatory development have not generated another database like the Honey Bee Network? Perhaps, despite all the rhetoric, the mental barriers to learning from creative communities have still not been overcome. Sooner or later, however, we believe it will be understood as the foundation of authentic engagement with creative forces in any society.

We also have wondered why corporations have taken so long to recognise the need for sourcing ideas from outside, including from common people. Within industry, von Hippel (2005) and others have demonstrated unambiguously the extent to which product users can redesign or find new applications from which firms can benefit. However, the entire literature on user-driven or user-based innovations assumes that users will modify products only for their own happiness, while firms will utilise such innovations to augment their innovative capacity and make profits. Sharing these benefits with the provider of the modifications or new applications somehow remains either obscure or off the agenda for corporations.

Firms can benefit by not restricting their learning to only the users of their products or their competitors' products. They can also benefit from the ideas of grassroots innovators who may have developed solutions using their own concept, old parts of various devices, or a combination of these - and even sometimes, fabricating components afresh. Further, by reciprocating the contributions of creative communities, corporations may also fertilise the ground in which extremely frugal and affordable solutions are born.

How can firms learn from creative communities?

Learning through an open innovation platform can take place at four levels: [a] artefactual, [b] analogic or metaphorical, [c] heuristic and [d] gestalt or configuration (Gupta 2012).

6. Learning by using innovations as a frugal template of a solution is the *artefactual* way of learning. The existing form, feature and function are drawn upon, although the product design may be amplified.
7. A grassroots innovation could trigger *analogic* learning when the concept is used but not the exact original design.



Gurucharan Singh Pradhan, teacher from Orissa, sharing his expertise (Image: SRISTI)¹⁹

¹⁹ http://www.sristi.org/hbnew/honeybee_detailed.php?ID=17515&page=2&search_case=pradhan%20ten%20in%20one

8. The *heuristics* underlying an innovation can spawn creative ideas in different domains. This more abstract level of learning is influential in generating new pathways of thinking.
9. The *gestalt* view of learning implies looking at not just the technological parameters but also the constellation of other underlying factors such as institutional, cultural, ethical and philosophical. Sometimes, the motivation and trigger for an innovation converge or synchronise because of the innovator's institutional context. Reinforcement of our desire to do something useful, through the formation of institutions and socio-cultural networks, can support us in actually achieving this desire rather than having it diluted by other desires and activities.

In addition, one can learn from people on the margin within the firm to develop mental space for learning from minds on the margin outside the firm. However, these minds are *not* marginal (Gupta 2009, Ted Talk).

The tension of accountability

The formal system's inability to fathom the intricacies of the informal system of knowledge, innovation and practices sometimes becomes an epistemological problem. As posited by Berger and Luckman (2011) in the context of the sociology of knowledge, we try to move a bus merely by sitting in it, without realising that those who can push could be those who got off the bus for a while or are bystanders who agreed to give a push. When the bus drives off, the bystanders are left empty-handed despite having got the bus going. What do the bus riders owe those who gave the push? A pleasant 'thank you' might do in some cases; another good gesture might be to stop the bus for passengers to wave. This question of accountability reflects one of the tensions in the debates on knowledge economy and new social movements.



Shodh Yatra Learning Walk, 28th Shodh Yatra in Mizoram (Image: SRISTI)

The Honey Bee Network learned how to operationalise the four kinds of learning while building the eco-system to support sharing with accountability. Today, the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, gives the awards to grassroots innovators, and an annual exhibition of grassroots innovations is organised at the President's House. The IGNITE Awards for creative children are presented each year at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Ahmedabad by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who served as President of India between 2002 and 2007. The Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Awards, which honour the best technological projects, are given by Dr. R.A. Mashelkar, FRS and Chairperson of the National Innovation Foundation (NIF). The Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions (SRISTI) honours outstanding achievers in different fields with SRISTI Samman awards every year.



Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, IGNITE Award Function, 2010 (Image: NIF)

The children, youth and innovators – some from informal and some from formal sectors - are a part of a composite innovation eco-system. The Honey Bee Network, which is both a platform and a social movement, provides the glue that links creative people in the formal and informal sectors.

The creation of the Honey Bee ecosystem

When we began asking young students from rural Gandhian institutions to find local innovators by scouting for 'oddballs' in the villages, we didn't use any complex methodology or rapid learning tools. We asked the children to talk about the examples of creativity they knew which *interested*, *inspired*, or *intrigued* them. While listening, we underlined what kind of examples we were looking for. The message got home without much ambiguity. Creative communities began to be identified, recognised, respected and rewarded for sharing their ideas with us.

For the first ten years, the Network didn't (and still doesn't) have many material resources, so it extended its non-material individual and collective recognition. SRISTI still pursues this direction. The National Innovation Foundation (NIF) does provide material individual and collective recognition. The database at www.sristi.org and www.honeybee.org are in the public domain for people to study and learn, and we find that the more we share, the more we learn from people around the world.



Local healer sharing his knowledge about local medical plants with Shodh Yattris in Johanafall, 27th Shodh Yatra in Jarkhand (Image: SRISTI)

Recently, for example, Matthias Nott, who lives in a mountainous region of Switzerland, read about the Network and sent a small incremental innovation he had made in a lawn mower. On sloping grassland, the lawnmower's rubber wheels used to slip, so energy was wasted. Turning screw nails inside out in the wheels solved the problem. While this might be considered tinkering, or only a small improvement rather than a great innovation, we wouldn't have learned about it unless we had established a model of sharing ideas with the world. A large pool of such ideas can and should be shared openly while, of course, giving due credit to the providers of ideas.

Many more substantial innovations are made by people with much less education or material resources. Two brothers in Assam, Mehter Hussain and Mushtaq Ahmed, designed a bamboo windmill to irrigate a small paddy field with the help of a hand pump, for about \$100 USD. Later modified to be used for pumping brine water for salt harvesting in Gujarat, the cost went up to \$1200 USD but the basic principle remained the same. The brothers asked two questions, which a trained mind probably would not have asked. Firstly, does it matter whether a paddy field is irrigated in four hours or 40 hours? Secondly, does it matter whether water goes to the field in spurts, or smoothly? The answer to both questions was, No. In fact, the slower the irrigation, the better, because fewer nutrients are leached and plants absorb more nutrients. Further innovation – in terms of not fitting a gearbox, which is the most difficult and costly part to maintain – became possible once the heuristic of not maximising output per unit of time and not preferring smoother flow over regular flow was developed. One can thus learn at both the artefactual level and the heuristic level.



Student showing local plants during 28th Shodh Yatra in Mizoram (Image: SRISTI)

Similarly, farmers have developed herbal pesticides, veterinary medicines, growth promoters, new varieties of crop, and numerous food processing or farm machines. Once during a Shodh Yatra, a learning walk we organise twice a year, we were walking in arid Kutchh, in Gujarat state. Every year, we walk in summer in regions which are hot and in winter in regions which are cold. After listening to Anil Gupta's half-hour talk on the need to use herbal rather than chemical pesticides, a farmer said that "any plant that animals don't eat, could be a source of herbal pesticides". He thus summarised in one line what had taken Anil Gupta half an hour to say.

During the past 15 years of walking about 5000 km, we have learned a great deal from people who are knowledge rich and economically poor. We have encountered numerous examples of frugal or Gandhian innovations. For example, a compressed air car developed by Kanak Gogoi, which costs hardly five cents per kilometer to operate, will be very useful for transportation in enclosed environments once this technology is stabilised. Mansukh Bhai Prajapati developed seven complex machines to make a non-stick clay pan, clay pressure cooker, and clay fridge. To call such inventions 'jugaad', or makeshift, does great injustice to the experimental and innovative spirit of common people.

While patents have been filed for more than 500 inventors, including children, we are very aware that patents should not be used to prevent people-to-people learning. Therefore, we have developed the concept of *Technology Commons*. The Grassroots Technological Innovation Acquisition Fund also has been created to expand the public domain by facilitating payment of a small compensation to the innovators who assign their rights to NIF. NIF can then distribute these technologies to various innovators at no cost or low cost. More than 70 technologies have already been acquired for sharing worldwide (www.nifindia.org/gtiaf).



Mansukhbhai Prajapati with his semi-circular kiln for hardening clay products in Vakaner, Gujarat (Image: SRISTI)

Lessons from the Honey Bee Network

Over the last two and a half decades, the intimate encounters between local knowledge holders as well as among creative communities and the formal sector have illuminated several lessons about engagement for augmenting an inclusive innovation ecosystem. These lessons include:

- Conserving creativity and maintaining knowledge systems;
- Transparent benefit sharing;
- Combining intellectual property with open source;
- Mobilising voluntary support from the formal sector;
- Expanding the public domain;
- Corporate engagement with the network;
- Openness to explore; and
- Wider awareness about generosity of innovators.

We discuss each of these lessons in the next section.

1. Conserving creativity and maintaining knowledge systems

Rather than gaining incentives for themselves, many elderly knowledge providers were concerned more about the younger generation keeping the knowledge system alive. Local language databases in easily accessible format make it easy for young people to gain access to low cost, environmentally friendly, and affordable solutions. Creation of knowledge as a public good thus helps motivate elders to share what they know. The flow of knowledge between formal and informal sector gets accelerated through such public goods and recognition, respect and reward for knowledge providers (Gupta 2008). Early studies (Verma and Singh 1969) had drawn attention to the need to forge such partnerships.

2. Transparent benefit sharing

By ensuring complete transparency in scores of licensing deals made on behalf of the innovators, communities have gained confidence in the Network's ability. In one major licensing deal with a pharmaceutical company, the knowledge of six communities was pooled to develop an innovative herbal cream for eczema. The biomarkers were developed in the SRISTI Sadbhav Sanshodhan Laboratory to ensure quality control, and the technology was converted into a commercial product by the company. The royalty income is shared every year among all six communities.

3. Combining intellectual property with open source

While the Network has filed more than 500 patents through NIF in the name of innovators, it does not stifle the time-tested process of knowledge production, validation, processing, and sharing within society. The Network encourages people-to-people learning. However, the protected technologies become accessible to the firms only through licensing, rather than through ownership. This concept of *technology commons* (Sinha 2008) has helped advance the concept of collective rights over a bundle of lead innovations and its derivative incremental innovations. Such a bundle can be licensed to a firm for benefit sharing with all members of the commons.

4. Mobilising voluntary support from the formal sector

NIF worked with more than 180 design firms and laboratories in the public and private sectors to pursue partnerships for adding value in grassroots innovations and outstanding traditional knowledge. The ethical basis of the open innovation platform meant that the Network could get 'extraordinary' support from the formal sector. Almost all the scientists and private firms charged far smaller amounts for validation and value addition compared to their market rates. Leading intellectual property rights firms in India and also in the United States (e.g. KLNG) offered help for filing patents, plant variety protection, trademark, etc., in the name of innovators, at one tenth of their normal fees or even pro bono. If all this support is converted into monetary value, then millions of dollars' worth of contribution has been made by predominantly small and medium firms and public and private research labs. This demonstrates that markets can be moulded to encourage communication and cooperation among formal and informal sectors following ethical values.

5. Expanding the public domain

The Network has shared more than 10,000 innovations and practices in public as against hardly 550 which have been patented. These innovations and outstanding practices are available at the websites www.sristi.org and www.honeybee.org, some of it available in two or three languages. With no expectation of reciprocity, the Honey Bee Network offers to share the entire public domain databases with any community-based organisations in the world that are willing to make it available to local communities in local languages (Gupta 1995; Gupta et al 2003). However, if these communities do share their local knowledge with the Honey Bee Network newsletter, it will be acknowledged with gratitude. In the last six years, a very strong Network has emerged in China and almost 7,000 innovations have been shared with the Network²⁰. Similarly, the Network has been growing in Malaysia, Indonesia, Namibia, Sri Lanka and many other countries. It now has a presence in around 70 countries.

²⁰ The database of grassroots innovations in China can be accessed via <http://cxcy.tjufe.edu.cn>

6. Corporate engagement with the Network

Several large companies have begun to engage with the Network to explore an open innovation platform for augmenting their own grassroots reach, and also to gain some insights about extremely affordable and frugal design and delivery of solutions. GE (General Electric) R&D Lab has offered to support some of the grassroots 'energy' innovators in redesigning their technologies. GE also has honoured some GYTI awardees at www.techpedia.in and is helping to review the submissions for SRISTI's annual awards to technology students.

TATA Agrico has signed an agreement with one grassroots innovator, Rohanlal Vishwakarma, to market his sugarcane bud chipper across the country, thus offering a nation-wide distribution chain far beyond the capability of a small and frugal innovator.

Mansukhbhai Prajapati, developer of the Miti Cool clay fridge, experienced spectacular business growth after getting a helpful offer for country-wide transportation of the fragile product along with an insurance cover so that the buyer pays only when she gets the product in good working condition. The Transport Corporation of India, a large logistics company, provided the country-wide logistical and insurance solutions to Mansukhbhai.

7. Openness to explore

Many more scientists in public and private labs are willing to give a chance to the grassroots innovators. This is partly due to compassion, and partly to the expectation of good and novel scientific results based on ideas provided by common people. However, as institutional incentives for the scientists to deal with local communities are rare, their engagement with the informal sector is influenced by their personal motivation. Compared with corporations, the public research and development system seems to have opened a little more widely, with agricultural research being more open than industrial research. However, the policy thrust for forging partnerships is still lacking, and institutionalised mechanisms for sharing the findings of research based on people's knowledge is still determined by individual choice. There are no guidelines requiring the sharing of findings based on local knowledge with the knowledge providers to build their capacity and innovate better in future. Benevolence-driven exchanges seem to outnumber the competency-driven exchanges.

8. Wider awareness about generosity of innovators

The print, TV and internet media are getting more and more interested in stories about innovations among common people. The country's changing economic condition seems to trigger more curiosity about ordinary people achieving uncommon results, and such stories reinforce the emerging aspirations of other common people who are struggling to find their way in a competitive world. In such a context, open innovation systems facilitate the easy flow of knowledge across sectors and domains. Large corporations, however, have not yet begun to see common peoples' problem-solving ability as a solution to their internal research and development challenges. Only in one case did a very large manufacturer of washing machines contact the Honey Bee Network to explore the idea that competent grassroots innovators might join hands with the company's research and development staff to co-create an affordable washing machine. In future, however, such requests may increase.

Using these opportunities fully

In this article, we have looked at a framework of knowledge exchange between the formal and informal sectors, and at opportunities facilitated by the open innovation platforms' normative ethical conditions (also see Pew Ethical Guidelines, 1995). We have looked at factors that influence knowledge holders' willingness to share their knowledge with the formal sector. We have seen the stickiness in the efforts of the formal sector to acknowledge, activate or reciprocate the knowledge shared by common people.



Idea Competition with local children in Pachor Village during 29th Shodh Yatra in Madra Pradesh (Image: SRISTI)

To use these opportunities fully, it is necessary to create an ecosystem that facilitates mutual interest between formal and informal sectors. A portfolio of material and non-material incentives for individuals or groups is needed (Gupta 1997; 2006). Actors in the formal sector should be willing to share how they have treated, or used, the knowledge sourced from the informal sector. They may also need incentives from their organisation for creating public goods that will fertilise the soil that nurtured the peoples' knowledge that has been shared with them so openly. The institutional context which promotes proprietary technologies and rewards people for filing patents can also encourage the creation of open source content.

Recent social movements and societal struggles seem to indicate engagement between the two sectors is likely to broaden, given the overwhelming generosity of knowledge-rich, economically poor people.

Updates about the Honey Bee Network's activities can be followed on

our blog <http://creativityatgrassroots.wordpress.com/>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/hbnconnect>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Honey.Bee.Network>

and our websites at www.sristi.org , www.nifindia.org , www.honeybee.org

The Honey Bee Newsletter can be subscribed to at <http://www.sristi.org/hbnew/subscribe.php> Individual issues can be ordered online at scribd <http://www.scribd.com/hbncon>

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About the Author:

Dr. Anil Gupta is currently a professor in the Centre for Management in Agriculture. His unique work, analysing indigenous knowledge of farmers and pastoralists and building bridges to science-based knowledge, led to his being elected at a young age to India's National Academy of Agricultural Sciences and recognition through the Pew Conservation Scholar Award (1993-96) from the University of Michigan.

His desire to develop a platform to recognise, respect and reward local innovators was the stimulus behind the creation of the Honey Bee Network. The name Honey Bee was chosen to reflect how innovations are collected without making the innovators poorer and how connections are created between innovators, just as bees collect from flowers and cross-pollinate without shortchanging. To help provide support structures for grassroots innovators and link formal and informal knowledge systems, SRISTI was established in 1993 as a global initiative and an NGO, to network local innovators. It provides organisational support to the Honey Bee Network in over 70 countries. The National Innovation Foundation was set up by Department of Science and Technology (DST) in 2000 to make India a global leader in sustainable technologies. He can be contacted anilgb@gmail.com

Marianne Esders is a PhD researcher affiliated with the Centre for Sustainability Management at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany and IIM Ahmedabad, India. Her thesis is on Reciprocity between Formal and Informal Sector in Open Innovation Platforms. She has been working with SRISTI on topics related to grassroots innovations, cultural entrepreneurship and open innovation since March 2012. She also joined the

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Ned Seabrook reviews Paul Matthews' new book

Informal Learning at Work

Ned Seabrook

Informal Learning At Work: How to Boost Performance in Tough Times

Paul Matthews

Three Faces Publishing, Milton Keynes 2013

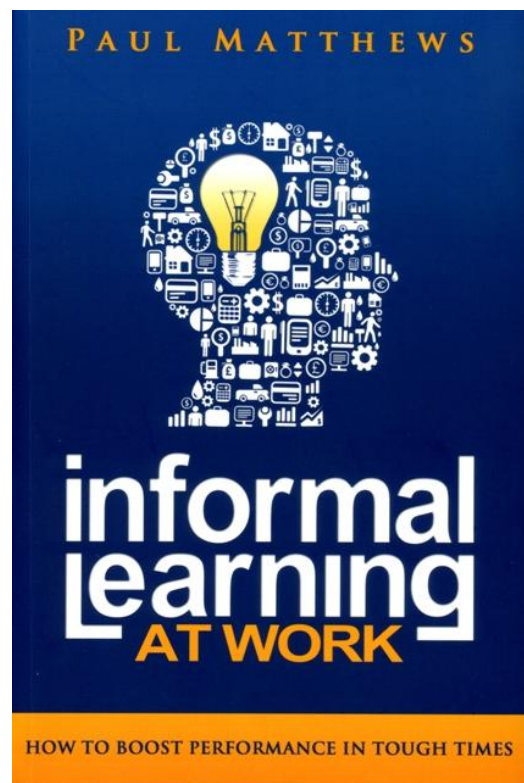
Paperback 256 pages

Cover price £14.97

ISBN 978-1-909552-00-5

Kindle available

Paul heads up 'People Alchemy' which focuses on providing performance support tools which, as he explains in this book, are a critical component of enabling informal learning in the workplace. He has written and talked about Informal Learning in meetings, blogs and articles, and now finally he has written this book.



This paperback combines two interesting elements. Firstly it defines and colours a clear picture of Informal Learning and how it drives performance. Yes, Informal Learning happens already in a sporadic haphazard way, driven by curiosity, urgent need and serendipity. But what exactly is it? 'Informal Learning' is tricky to define, encompassing so much. So taking just part of Paul's words:

"Informal Learning is any learning or collaboration that takes place outside of a class, seminar or workshop."(p 41)

Secondly, and perhaps more useful for Learning and Development (L&D) professionals, the book provides strategies and practical actions to help them reshape their own role - a role that is as far-reaching as organisational development. Broadly, Paul argues that this is to encourage, facilitate and support Informal Learning in ways that boost performance.

Paul's opening two chapters establish the context, drawing on a wide variety of sources, reports and surveys. He explores the current 'tough times' for business and the resulting challenges for L&D. This is competently argued, making a strong case for his proposed solutions.

The meat of the message is in chapters 3 and 4, where Informal Learning is given shape. A quick search (an example of informal learning in practice) on Google scholar or in Wikipedia will identify the history of and key thinkers on 'informal learning'. Clearly, this is not a new topic, although Paul covers it succinctly. So what fresh value does this book add? Well, Paul explains how Informal Learning can deliver where traditional learning delivery methods struggle. He backs this up with plenty of practical examples.

The following seven chapters of the book could almost stand alone under the title 'The new L&D role', which is how chapter 5 is headed. Paul presents this new role and packs in notes and practical tips to tackle all the issues that L&D face in winning support, budget, and in seeing that Informal Learning makes a positive difference to performance. Getting that foot in the boardroom door clearly requires a lot of legwork.

This highly readable book largely delivers on its promise. It is delivered in a style that is informative and comfortable, well supported with references at the back to follow up as part of your own informal learning. The plentiful examples are concise, but with enough detail to provide a firm foundation for action. By linking Learning through Engagement to Productivity, Paul makes it clear that the effectiveness of Informal Learning is determined by the organisational culture. Therein lies the challenge for many L&D specialists.

Perhaps it is just me, but I twitch when I read phrases like '80% of (informal) learning' on one page, and then on the next that L&D can't measure this kind of 'learning'. But I do accept the principle of the need for somehow monitoring its impact. Inevitably many of the mini case studies and examples are drawn from large organisations. Indeed some of the bespoke solutions would require levels of technical expertise or investment that are generally beyond the reach of smaller businesses.

Initially, I had been coming to the view that there was little 'new' in this book. But as I approached the end I was pleased to read about the role of social media concepts in support of learning. That, combined with his discussion of the new role for L&D, gives me grounds for thinking that there is a ready readership for the book. L&D professionals suffering under tight budgets in medium to large organisations will find that this book gives them useful ideas about how to extend their influence to foster informal learning and boost performance in the workplace.

About the reviewer



Ned has been engaged with 'learning' in all its forms for nearly 30 years. He operates out of Dorset as a mentor, coach and development consultant.

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Some forthcoming events

You are most welcome to join us.

Please click on the links if you'd like to find out more.

| Date | Event | Link |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 24 April, 1.00 – 4.30 pm | AMED AGM and 'Exploring Frontiers' design session Roots & Shoots, London | http://www.amed.org.uk/events/amed-agm-2013 . |
| 26 April, 1.15 - 4.30 pm | AMED Writers' Group: ' <i>Master your inner critic: free your writing voice</i> ', with Melanie Greene, Roots and Shoots, London | http://www.amed.org.uk/events/wg-master-your-inner-critic-free-your-writing-voice-with-melanie |
| 17 May, 11 am – 4 pm | AMED's 7th Annual Collaborative Writing Workshop <i>'Reflective Writing for Personal and Professional Development'</i> , with Jeannie Wright and Bob Thomson, at the University of Warwick. There are a very few free places left, so do book now if you'd like to join us. | http://www.amed.org.uk/events/7th-annual-collaborative-writing-workshop-watch-this-space-for-mo |
| 31 May | Publication of the Summer 2013 edition of <i>e-O&P</i> | www.amed.org.uk |
| 2 & 3 August | Joint IAF Europe/AMED post-publication workshop following the Spring 2013 edition of <i>e-O&P</i> and as a prelude to 'Exploring Frontiers' (see below): ' <i>Open Source Thinking; possibilities for "yes, and ..." conversations</i> ', Friends Meeting House, Brighton, England | http://www.amed.org.uk/events/open-source-thinking-possibilities-for-yes-and-conversations |
| 31 August | Publication of the Autumn 2013 edition of <i>e-O&P</i> | www.amed.org.uk |
| 8 & 9 October (details tbc) | <i>'Exploring Frontiers 2013'</i> | http://www.amed.org.uk/events/exploring-frontiers-2013 |
| 18 October, 1.15 – 4.30 pm | AMED Writers' Group: <i>'Open Space and Writing'</i> , with Lin Grist | http://www.amed.org.uk/events/open-space-and-writing-with-lin-grist |

Additionally, you can find a regularly updated list of events posted by individual AMED Members, Networkers and Guests by clicking on [this link](#), and scrolling down the calendar of dates.

Your invitation to write for e-O&P, Vol 20, No 2, Summer 2013 'Exploring Frontiers'

Context

At AMED, we've decided that it's time to revive our 'Frontiers Conferences' series. An AMED conference is not what you might expect elsewhere. No presentations. No gurus on pedestals. Instead, committed and creative peers engaging with each other inclusively in personal development through conversations about themes they're keen to explore.

This AMED 'conference' doesn't only take place over two specific days in the autumn (on 8 and 9 October). It's already under way. The conversations have already begun, as you'll see in the Spring 2013 edition of e-O&P on 'Open Source Thinking', as well as in its post-publication workshop on 2 and 3 August, and in postings on the AMED website.

As themes develop, they'll stake a claim to some of the spaces we're holding open for the autumn 'Exploring Frontiers' event. Below you'll find links to both the online discussions and to the event pages.

One way to contribute to these conversations in advance is by on-line discussion. Another is by writing for the Summer 2013 edition of e-O&P. We'd love to hear from you by either means, and this is your invitation to write something for our Summer 2013 edition of AMED's quarterly journal. We'll help you to get into print in every way we can.

In thinking about your ideas, you might find the following live links useful:

- [AMED's 'Exploring Frontiers' Event on 8/9 October](#)
- [Open Source Thinking: possibilities for yes, and conversations on 2/3 August](#)
- [Exploring Frontiers 2013 – on-line discussion](#)

Our challenge to you

To set the ball rolling, we've posed the following challenge:

The world is in economic and political turmoil. As professional developers, we need to review critically all that we do and how we do it. What is our role in these turbulent times, and are we up to it?

Some possible inquiry questions

To stimulate your thinking about what you might write, we've also suggested some initial issues that you might like to consider. (This list is not prescriptive or exclusive, and we'd welcome your own take on other issues which you feel are at stake).

- What have been the causes, impacts, reactions and responses to 'economic and political turmoil' by the various actors so far? How effective and appropriate are they?
- What is the range and scope of our 'professional roles' as developers? How adequate are they?
- What are our clients' expectations of us?
- How effective are our interventions at present? Do we need to re-think our roles radically as a community of practice?
- What are the implications for developing the developers?

You might find other ideas by following – and perhaps interacting with - the on-line debate.

About e-Organisations and People (e-O&P)

e-O&P is AMED's quarterly online journal, published in pdf format. For 25 years, *e-O&P* has been connecting the worlds of work, theory, ideas, innovation and practice by making new knowledge and original thinking available to developers, facilitators and their clients through persuasive writing.

Call for expressions of interest: RSVP by 24 March 2013

If you are interested in contributing to the Summer 2013 issue of *e-O&P*, we'd love to hear from you. Please send each of us **by 24 March 2013** a couple of paragraphs sketching your provisional ideas. We will then contact you to discuss your ideas further, and to brief you about a more detailed publication schedule. The journal will be published online in the week beginning 27 May. Articles or discussion papers are typically 1,500 to 3,000 words in length, though they can be shorter or longer, and we encourage the use of headings, images, diagrams and live hyperlinks. We want to hear your voice, and help you to have it heard in a wider forum!

Ned Seabrook, E: chair@amed.org.uk

Paul Z Jackson, E: paul@thesolutionsfocus.co.uk

Guest Editors

Your invitation to become more involved with e-O&P

About e-O&P

e-O&P is AMED's quarterly online journal, available in pdf format, for academics, professionals, managers and consultants at all stages of their careers. It addresses innovative approaches to personal, professional and organisational development in a reflective and accessible way. It has a practical bias with a balance of well-written thought pieces, case studies, interviews, articles, reviews and editorials. Our articles are succinct, engaging, authentic and easy to read. We maintain our high standards of writing through the careful selection of relevant themes and our support of outstanding guest editors.

About our guest editors

Once selected, our editors have a pretty free hand within a broad set of guidelines. Guest editors deliver to the e-O&P editorial board a set of articles of suitable quality, ready for publication, according to a pre-arranged schedule. This involves editors in inviting proposals for contributions, identifying authors, commissioning stimulating articles, reviewing, and where appropriate, critiquing drafts and proof-reading final copy.

About our 'Critical Friends'

For their particular edition, guest editors often find it useful to create a small, temporary editorial team to support them, including 'Critical Friends'. The e-O&P editorial board is happy to help them find such collaborators, and is on hand to explore any issues or concerns that arise, bearing in mind our limited time to engage in extensive, detailed reading or conversations.

We are always looking to expand e-O&P's network of 'Critical Friends', who would be available to guest editors or individual authors on request. Depending on their preferences and any specific need, Critical Friends can help by reading drafts, offering constructive feedback, clarifying ideas, commenting on style, providing encouragement, or by proof-reading or copy-editing pre-publication texts. In return, this offers Critical Friends the opportunity to develop greater insight into, and awareness of possibilities for, their own writing and professional practice. They might even consider subsequently becoming a guest editor or author for e-O&P.

Are you interested in joining our exciting project?

If so, please contact one of us on the e-O&P editorial board as soon as possible. We'd love to hear from you.

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About our associations: IAF and AMED



Since 1994, the International Association of Facilitators has been promoting, supporting and advancing the art and practice of professional facilitation through methods exchange, professional growth, practical research, collegial networking and support services, and annual regional conferences. Our 1,300 members work in a variety of environments and at a variety of tasks.

Believing that the profession of facilitation provides a critical set of skills in the global society of the 21st century, IAF is organized globally, regionally, and locally. Our seven regions are Africa, Asia, Oceania, Canada, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United States. Local chapters of IAF allow members to participate in activities locally as well as in regional and global activities. Globally, IAF offers a peer-based Certified Professional Facilitator assessment process, publishes a Journal and a monthly newsletter, and supports the IAF Methods Database. Several regions also publish their own newsletters.

For more, visit www.iaf-world.org.



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AMED stands for the Association for Management Education and Development, www.amed.org.uk. We are a long-established membership organisation and educational charity devoted to developing people and organisations. AMED exists for people who

want to share, learn and experiment, and find support, encouragement, and innovative ways of communicating. Conversations are open, constructive, and facilitated.

At AMED, we strive to benefit our members and the wider society. Exclusive Member benefits include excellent professional indemnity cover, free copies of the quarterly journal *e-O&P*, and discounted fees for participation in a range of face-to-face events, special interest groups, and our interactive website. We aim to build on our three cornerstones of **knowledge**, **innovation** and **networking** in the digital age. Wherever we can, AMED Members, Networkers and Guests seek to work with likeminded individuals and organisations, to generate synergy and critical mass for change.

To find out more about us, you are welcome to visit our website www.amed.org.uk, or contact Linda Williams, our Membership Administrator, E: amedoffice@amed.org.uk, T: 0300 365 1247