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### **Can inter-organizational relations (IOR) research gain collaborative advantage?**

**Steve Cropper**, Research Institute for Public Policy and Management, Keele University, Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG, UK. Tel: +44 1782 583193; e-mail: [s.a.cropper@keele.ac.uk](mailto:s.a.cropper@keele.ac.uk)

**Mark Ebers**, Faculty of Business Administration, Economics, and Social Sciences, Cologne University, Albertus-Magnus-Platz, 50923 Cologne, Germany

Tel: +49 221 4702458; e-mail: [egers@wiso.uni-koeln.de](mailto:egers@wiso.uni-koeln.de)

**Chris Huxham** (Corresponding Author), Advanced Institute of Management Research and University of Strathclyde Business School, Department of Management, 199 Cathedral Street, Glasgow, G4 0QU, UK. Tel: +44 141 553 6113; e-mail: [chris@gsb.strath.ac.uk](mailto:chris@gsb.strath.ac.uk)

**Peter Smith Ring**, Department of Management, College of Business Administration, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045, USA. Tel: 1-310-338-7411; e-mail: [pring@lmu.edu](mailto:pring@lmu.edu)

#### **Abstract**

Inter-organizational relations (IOR) research is, as its name implies, concerned with the relationships that obtain between and among organizations, including collaborations, partnerships, alliances and networks. More specifically, it is concerned with understanding the origins, character and pattern, rationale and consequences of these relationships. IOR research has been extensive and highly varied. However, we will argue in this paper that, collectively, it “punches below its weight” because fragmentation of IOR research has prevented the rapid advancement of knowledge. In short, we assert that the potential knowledge synergy is not being harvested; metaphorically – and ironically – there is no collaborative advantage in IOR research. Perhaps as a consequence of this fragmentation, the extent to which many strands of IOR research have been able to provide practical insight that practitioners can adopt is questionable.

In this paper we assess the extent to which research into IOR, taken collectively, does, or could, meet two aims: to provide participants with insight and guidance that is relevant to their practice; and to create theory that frames and explains IOR in ways that both encapsulate existing knowledge and generates questions for future research that are seen widely as important and fruitful. We begin by reviewing the nature of IOR research, and identify differentiating foci of various streams, relating to: relationship structure; relationship content; governance mechanisms; macro level processes; organizational attributes; micro processes; and macro-level contexts. We then discuss two examples of fragmentation before examining whether IOR constitutes a field of scientific inquiry. We surmise that research on IOR currently is far from having developed a paradigm, as there does not seem to be an unchallenged set of core assumptions, propositions and research exemplars that regularly guide IOR research. However, IOR nevertheless has fleshed out a few institutional features that characterize a distinct field. The longevity of the MOPAN conference is one of these, along with the abundance of interest groups, conference streams and other IOR focused conferences. Another sign is the series of review articles and Handbooks that have appeared over the years. Today there is less (but still too much) variance exhibited among contributions to IOR than there is between IOR research and the disciplines and theories on which it draws.

The paper concludes by considering – at three levels – what can be done to make IOR more field-like. At an individual level we suggest that researchers who see themselves as belonging to one or more of the streams of IOR that currently thrive must begin to adjust their own research agendas by accessing different theoretical lenses. At the field level, we argue for the merits of eclecticism; research focused on different levels of analysis and on different concepts related to managing in general is clearly needed in combination to cover the various aspects of the problems that managers of IORs have to deal with. Finally, we suggest that more vehicles for carrying out cross stream investigations – tools that make it easier for researchers to think outside of the constraints of their own theoretical perspective – are needed.

**Keywords:** Inter-organizational relations, IOR, collaborative advantage, practice theoretical lens, relationships, partnerships, alliances, networks, collaboration, field of inquiry

## **Commitment and community in the success of a high-performance R & D team**

*Lisa J. Daniel*, PhD (corresponding author), University of Adelaide School of Business, 10 Pulteney Street, Adelaide, SA 5005, Email: [lisa.daniel@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:lisa.daniel@adelaide.edu.au)

### **Abstract**

Increasing competition means more high tech' organisations are using strategic alliances, joint ventures and cooperative agreements to create winning expertise. Managers coordinating the high performance teams in highly competitive industries are faced with balancing complex team relationships with corporate deadlines and quality standards. Pressure on the team to perform and the leader to deliver can frequently lead to detrimental situations. Insightful management of a team of high performing inter-organizational professionals requires operational latitude for effective convergence of multiple complex relationships. This paper reports on the use of commitment, community and cohesion in a diverse multi-organisational multi-national R&D team to achieve successful technological development and innovation outcomes.

Teams are recognized as groups that share a 'community of practice' where learning is derived from a socially embedded process (Capello 1999). Effective, well functioning teams have been shown to deliver performance and achievements that exceed the cumulative sum of the collective individuals. Recently, a special sub-set of teams has been identified, i.e., high-performance R&D teams (Grossman 1997; Reagans and Zuckerman 2001). These teams are comprised of multiple professionals with diverse experience and specialist knowledge. In the case of inter-organizational high performance R&D teams associated with new technical product development, effective performance and the ability to develop constructive solutions to complex problems relies on the establishment of team processes that will facilitate communication, shared understanding and sensemaking. As inter-organizational high performance R&D teams become increasingly utilized as a valuable technological resource, the successful integration of high performing experts requires R&D managers to develop a comprehensive sense of engagement that can guide more than project milestones, to achieve cohesive interactions and synergistic outcomes.

Inter-organizational high performance R&D teams are characterized by the collection of highly trained technical and scientific experts from diverse sources to work collectively and simultaneously on complex technological projects where rapid development demands create an intensely challenging environment (Grossman 1997; Hoyt and Gerloff 2000). The effective management of an inter-organizational high performance R&D teams to a level where synergistic performance can achieve novel technical development and successful product delivery in critical time frames, requires not only procedural insight but also astute recognition of the importance of the tacit interpersonal dimensions of the team.

Insights from an in-depth case study of a successful high performance R&D team in the semiconductor industry reveal how market leader IBM has successfully managed such a diverse specialist team. While previous research on managing high performance R&D teams has focused on functional relationships and operational factors, this study reveals that while these factors are significant, the key influences to the teams' success are shown to be much more humanistic. This case reveals the significance of recognition and engagement of the

individual in the inter-organizational high performance R&D team. Further, the development of a shared technical agenda was seen to clearly facilitate a sense of cohesion, commitment and community that was both fundamental to success and found to be critically important to the operational success of the day-to-day activities of the line managers and employees.

**Keywords:** High performance teams, collaboration, communication, sociology of innovation.

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## **Interactive collaborative research: varieties of impact**

*Elena Antonacopoulou, Kerry Wilson and Alexander Kofinas*

GNOSIS, University of Liverpool Management School, Chatham Building

Liverpool L69 7ZH, UK. Tel: +44 151 795 3727

Email: [E.Antonacopoulou@liv.ac.uk](mailto:E.Antonacopoulou@liv.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

The recent push across all research councils for their research to deliver economic impact is based on the perception of UK research as good at the basic level but often failing to have commercial and societal impacts (Porter and Ketels 2003; BERR 2007). This push toward impact is originating from the government and its agencies such as the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform. Thus the focus on applicable collaborative research is shaping the research efforts funded by the governmental institutions and bring renewed emphasis on academic/practitioner collaborative research efforts (Lee and Bozeman 2005; BERR 2007; AACSB 2008).

Academic-practitioner collaborative research is fraught with problems as each community has a different perception of what is impactful research (TEEC 2005; Lahteenmaki-Smith, Hyytinen *et al.* 2006; Venn-Munn 2006). Not only they put different emphasis on the contextual dimensions of collaborative research (political, social, environmental, economic), the temporal dimensions (long term vs. short term), the scale of collaboration's activities (individual, group, institution, society at large) but each community uses different indicators to judge what its impact has been. This suggests that the collaborative partners utilise different lenses when engaged in joint collaborative research. These different perceptions affect the way collaborative partners frame and approach collaborative research.

Governmental policy makers, research councils and other relevant institutions must take such diversity of perceptions into account when they monitor and evaluate collaborative research projects.

Drawing from a sample of collaborative researchers who have engaged in interactive collaborative research we wish to illustrate different experiences of impact in collaborative research and sketch this diversity and richness of impact in the context of collaborative research. The research team has used a diversity of methods (Interviews, surveys, documentation, auto-ethnographic data) to derive a mosaic of impressions of impact and to delineate aspects of impact that diverge or converge across practices.

The paper then attempts to highlight and clarify impact in collaborative research. It aims to sensitise policy makers, governmental institutions and research councils to the multitude of interpretations that impact may undergo dependant on the background, attitudes and practice of the research partners within the interactive collaboration. Such sensitivity may enable the councils to promote research that combines the strengths of the partners rather than the weaknesses and impacts positively to the economic and social welfare of society.

**Keywords:** Impact, Collaborative Research, Academic, Practitioner, Research Councils

## The efficacy of partnerships in child welfare interventions

*Mónica Henriques*

ISPA, Lisbon, Portugal

### Abstract

Endangered Child and Youth Commissions, as well as the remaining partnerships, are part of the social intervention panorama when we wish to intervene in such complex problems as child welfare, violence, substance abuse, poverty, among others. The interest and appropriateness of the investigation in this field is the result of the need to deepen the knowledge about the work developed by the partnerships, seeking to understand which factors contribute to their efficacy. At the same time, it is stimulated by the awareness of an increasing reality in Portugal, which is the emergence of partnerships induced, or even created, by law such as is the case with endangered child and youth commissions. The present work is part of a nationwide investigation which is being developed by the Partnerships Investigation Group of the Superior Institute of Applied Psychology. This is an exploratory work that analyses which elements of the climate and structure of the partnership explain its variation of perceived efficacy.

Two elements of the partnership's structure were focused, namely the span of members who take active part in the partnership and the formal structures present. At climate level, four aspects were targeted: the presence of a shared mission; shared decision-making; inclusive and efficient leadership and an also effective conflict-solving. It was tested whether partnerships could be considered more effective if: they had a more diversified and active membership, had more formal structures and had a more inclusive climate. The sample is composed of six commissions from the center of the country. Data was collected with the leaders (N=8) - through key-informer interview - and of the remaining members (N=73) - through Community Partnerships Perception of Efficacy Questionnaire. Both instruments were translated and adapted from the original work by Allen (2005). Statistically significant positive correlation was found among all elements of climate. In a general way the perception of efficacy was correlated with the presence of a shared mission ( $r_s = +0,51$  ;  $p = 0,001$ ), strategies for conflict-solving ( $r_s = +0,40$  ;  $p = 0,001$ ), the presence of a shared formal leadership ( $r_s = +0,30$  ;  $p = 0,018$ ), the presence of a shared informal leadership ( $r_s = +0,57$  ;  $p = 0,001$ ), as well as with some items in the shared decision-making scale. At the structure level, efficacy showed a positive correlation with satisfaction ( $r_s = +0,55$  ;  $p = <0.001$ ) and the number of activities members are involved in ( $r_s = -0,25$  ;  $p = 0,041$ ). On the other hand, statistically significant difference was found in the perception of efficacy among the members who have authority to make decisions for the organization they represent as opposed to the ones who didn't have the authority. The results have shown that commissions are evaluated as more efficient by their members when they perceive the climate as more inclusive, when they have authority to decide for the organizations they represent and when they manifest more satisfaction.

**Keywords:** partnership, efficacy, collaboration, climate, decision-making, conflict-solving, leadership, mission, structure.

A57

**Poverty proofing Public Private Partnerships in public service and infrastructure delivery in Ireland**

*Rory Hearne*

Department of Geography

Trinity College Dublin

Contact details: Tel:+353 1 4544682; Email – [rhearne@tcd.ie](mailto:rhearne@tcd.ie)

**Abstract**

This paper explores the origins and development of PPPs in the delivery of public services and infrastructure internationally and in Ireland, where they were introduced on a pilot basis in June 1999. It contextualises PPPs within the broader process of privatisation and neoliberalism in the welfare state and the reform of public services in particular. It provides an analysis from the literature of both the benefits and more recent criticisms of PPPs in practice in terms of value for money, efficiency and equality impacts on public service and infrastructure provision. It outlines the extent to which the development and outcomes of PPPs in Ireland mirror the international experience of PPPs. This paper presents important findings for public policy in terms of evidence of the increasing role of the private sector and neoliberal perspectives in Irish public services. The provision of public services that meet equality and participative principles is explored.

**Keywords:** Partnership; privatisation, welfare state, public policy, public services, equality, participation.

## **Ageing research - just waiting for a catalyst**

*Paul McGill*

Strategic Research Officer

Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI)

### **Abstract**

The Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) carried out a mapping of ageing research completed in Ireland over the last few years and found that less than 5% was all-Ireland and very little was inter-disciplinary. Moreover there has been a heavy concentration on biomedical research and studies on care systems at the expense of issues such as poverty and security, including employment and pensions.

CARDI has been keen from the beginning to make best possible use of very limited money, aiming to bring people together in networks throughout Ireland, across disciplines and in different sectors – academic, not-for-profit, public and private. We also seek the active engagement of older people themselves and a clear focus on improving policies and services affecting them. This is essential if we are to keep a focus on the longer term needs of the growing older population at a time when governments and others are more concerned with short-term economic medicine.

Two essential criteria in Call 1 of CARDI's grants programme, launched in January 2009, were that applications must be cross-border and inter-disciplinary. With €200,000 set aside for Call 1, we were overwhelmed by the response. This suggests that the research community and users of research are keen to move towards new ways of working and to begin conversations directed towards the goal of improving the quality of life of older people through improved health, relevant policies, improved services and a reduction in inequalities. Many of the applications submitted were to create networks that will bring together diverse perspectives and lead to the identification of research priorities. All they need is a catalyst.

This paper gives more information about the mapping exercise, using the framework set out in the UN Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and explores how a competitive grants programme can promote collaboration and advance the cause of greater cohesion.

**Keywords:** Older people, inter-disciplinary, cross-border, research networks

## **Setting up a local environmental health action plan around an industrial site in Beerse (Belgium - Flanders)**

*Koen Wynants*

Local environmental health worker, Turnhout (Belgium)

### **Abstract**

Short description of the project: The area around Beerse is historically and currently polluted (toxic heavy metals, noise and odour nuisance, negative perception of environmental health risks, etc). In order to reach a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, this community must be enabled to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Through a cooperative, interactive, constructive engagement process we are aiming to create a 'healthier environment' on a local scale. Participants include factories; workers organisations; local, regional and Flemish government; environmental and health agencies; community workers, citizens, General Practitioners.

Current status and future steps for the project: First we collected information about the perception of the public on environmental health risks, health & environmental data. In phase 2 of the project, several interactive meetings of a steering group were held, accompanied by different on-site visits. Purpose of the meetings was to co-construct and design a local environmental health action plan which contains actions that are supported by all. In the third phase, every actor, stakeholder and the public decided which actions they will implement. Because this kind of cooperation is unique and there are no prescribed rules for such partnerships, we designed an 'engagement declaration'. This declaration lists the major agreements. All the parties signed this charter. In the current phase, all parties are working together to implement the different actions.

Lessons learned: Although a lot of environmental and health data are public, the passive manner in which environmental health information is offered in Flanders makes it not very accessible for citizens. Consultation of the public about sensitive, complex and controversial environmental health issues is not only possible, but has also an added value. It results in - for policy makers - sometimes unknown issues and new interesting solutions, a less difficult and more qualitative debate, mutual understanding... Despite initially contradictory expectations, interests and mutual distrust, the different actors, stakeholders and public can combine power to improve the state of physical, mental and social well-being of the community. The installation of the new partnership took a lot of effort. But the intense approach and the mutual trust seems to make the partnership vast and sustainable.

**Keywords:** Environmental pollution, health and well-being, environmental health action plan, consultation, stakeholders