The Transfer of Innovations

Strategies to Promote the Generative Capability of Development Programmes

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Characteristics of innovation

- Innovation is about creating something **new** (from someone's point of view).
- Innovation produces **benefit** (for someone).
- Innovation is a consequence of **goal-oriented activity** (by someone).

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The division into technological and social innovations is obscured by the fact that…

- … innovations generally emerge in social networks and through processes of social interaction.
- … the social and institutional context has an effect on how eagerly innovations are adopted and how they diffuse in the economy and the society (i.e. innovations are only seldom neutral by their social impacts).
- As a consequence, all innovations (also technological ones) are socially shaped.

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Main concepts used in this presentation

- **Innovation** refers here to new models, methods, tools, practices or procedures that stem from goal-oriented activity and that produces benefit for someone.

- **Transfer** refers here to both the planned (often called dissemination) and the spontaneous (often called diffusion) spread of new ideas.

- **Development programme** refers here to goal-oriented activity for the development of good practices, bringing together several actors and making use of experimental projects.

- **Generative capability** refers here to the ability of a programme to provide results that benefit also other parties besides those directly involved in the projects.

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Linear model in the creation of innovations and the transfer of good practices in programmes

- The traditional strategy is based, roughly speaking, on a group of separate demonstration projects implemented by the most progressive actors in the field in question.

- The purpose of demonstration projects is to act as empirical proof to demonstrate some principle, practice, solution, etc.

- On the basis of the results of demonstration projects (**local innovations**), experts construct **good practices** and then start to pass these as blueprints for the use of other, less progressive actors.

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Demonstration projects are often ”too successful”. Why?

- They are equipped with exceptional resources in terms of funding and expertise.
- They can practise extensive target-specific tailoring for the unit concerned.
- They are implemented by progressive actors, which already have experience both of self-motivated development and cooperation with experts.
- Participation in the projects (and the programme) boosts the legitimacy and transparency of the project and, consequently, the commitment of the participants to implementing it as well as possible.
- Participation in the projects (and the programme) gives rise to what is called the Hawthorne effect, i.e. the participants improve their performance or give positive evaluations of the results of the experiment primarily because they themselves have received special attention.

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Characteristics of innovations that promote their diffusion (Rogers 2003)

- **Relative advantage**: the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes.
- **Compatability**: the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences and needs of potential adopters.
- **Simplicity**: the degree to which an innovation is perceived as easy to understand and use.
- **Trialability**: the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis.
- **Observability**: the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others.

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Different dynamics in transfer

- **Interactive technological innovations** (e.g. telephone): first, a critical mass must be achieved, after which further diffusion becomes self-sustaining.

- **Non-interactive technological innovations**: often relative advantage compared to non-technological (social) innovations with respect to most factors that are critical in transfer.

- **Non-technological (social) innovations**: transfer is usually more complicated than in the case of technological innovations.

Significance of local learning and re-invention

- Underlying the linear model is an idea of a streamlined three-stage CTR process: **Creation** (in context A) – **Transfer** (from context A to B) – **Reception** (in context B).

- The degree to which an innovation is re-invented, i.e. changed or modified by the adopter, is positively related to the innovation's sustainability (Rogers 2003).

- The need for local re-invention increases as we move from simple tools and techniques to more complex practices and procedures, not to mention principles underlying these practices and procedures.

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Constructive approach to innovation: three critical dimensions

Content (What?)	⇒	The new practice contains some properties that enable improvements to the current state of affairs.
Process (How?)	⇒	The new practice has been created in a process which, through wide participation of all relevant actors, has enabled broad-based utilization of expertise in designing and implementing solutions.
Context (Why?)	⇒	The new practice has been created in a context which, through extensive interaction between all relevant actors, has enabled the emergence of a shared understanding of the bases of solutions.

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Different types of programme outcomes

First-order results	Changes immediately caused by the projects in units participating in them.
Second-order results	Durability of these changes over time in units that participated in the projects.
Generative results	Benefits resulting from the projects to other parties besides those directly involved in them.
Infrastructure results	National, regional or sectoral enhancement of knowledge and know-how, and new kinds of multi-actor cooperation relationships found to be useful.
Programme learning	Learning that occurs ”inside” the programme during its implementation, helping develop its own context (orientation, resources and tools).
Policy learning	Learning that transcends the programme and extends to the role and function of the next-generation programme.

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Different types of programme outcomes

Type of outcome	Time span	Level	Beneficiary
First order	Short	Micro	Participating unit
Second order	Long	Micro	Participating unit
Generative	Long (short)	Meso	Other units, different stakeholder groups
Infrastructure	Long	Macro	R&D units, consultancy agencies, different stakeholder groups
Programme learning	Short	Macro	Programme agency
Policy learning	Long	Macro	Policy agency

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How to improve the ability of programmes to provide generative results?

- **Strategy 1**: Deploying different means of dissemination, e.g. training, mentoring, consultancy, seminars, publications, data banks and marketing, in a more efficient way.

- **Strategy 2**: Shifting resources from the ”over-resourced” creation stage to the ”under-resourced” transfer and reception stages.

- **Strategy 3**: Enhancing knowledge provided by demonstration projects by elaborating more detailed mechanisms between different phenomena (cause–effect relationships).

- **Strategy 4**: Enriching knowledge provided by demonstration projects by making the knowledge more interactive and easier to adopt.

- **Strategy 5**: Obscuring the boundary between separate creation, transfer and reception stages by making use of learning network-type of projects.

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Strategy 3: Enhancing knowledge from demonstration projects by elaborating causal mechanisms

- More detailed analysis of causal mechanisms between the new (good) practice and the desired outcomes is made.
- A realistic view on the generativity of the new (good) practice calls for a thorough analysis on the content of the practice and the process and context in which the practice was originally created.
- Generativity refers here to the ability of the practice to provide new insights and encouragement to other actors, with a view to promoting its adoption.

Strategy 4: Enriching knowledge from demonstration projects by making the knowledge interactive and easier to adopt

- Building up the good practice with a lot of “flesh and blood” (i.e. including also emotional aspects) by having it examined from multiple perspectives.

- Traditional “passive” or formal presentations, descriptions or case banks are substituted for more interactive ones.

- Interactive nature of the good practice is enhanced, for example, by using methods which are narrative or which produce different kind of emotional experiences where particular attention is paid to the different learning styles of different potential adopters.

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Strategy 5: Obscuring the boundary between creation, transfer and reception by using learning networks

- The linear CTR link is discarded and the creation of innovations and diffusion of good practices are promoted through co-creation within learning networks (LNs).
- A LN project is based on the idea of bringing together actors who share an interest in similar development issues but have a wide enough diversity of expertise and engaging them in long-term interaction with the aim of creating potential for innovation.
- Several parallel experimental development efforts starts in several unit, learning from each other through exchange of experiences and processes of co-creation.
- Co-creation forms a validation procedure for a good practice.

Different strategies in a nutshell

Strategy	Relation between CT&R	How to improve C?	How to improve T&R?
More efficient use of means for dissemination	Sequential	No change	More selective use of means for better targeted groups
Shift of resources from C to T&R	Sequential	More focused approach	Increased support for ”second wave” of development
Elaborating causal mechanisms of demonstration	Sequential	Greater research input	More convincing evidence-based argumentation
Enriching knowledge from demonstration	Partly overlapping	Broader base for validation	Bridging the social and cultural gap between C&R
Using learning networks	Parallel	Mutual learning in LN through interaction and co-creation improves C and forms a broader and more valid basis for T	

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Annex: Learning networks

Concept of learning network

- A **learning** network refers here to a network created specifically for learning.
- Here, learning is not simply a “by-product” of the sharing of experiences, which happens in all networks; instead, it is the explicit and primary function of the network to produce learning events.
- The learning subjects may be individuals, groups, organizations or other communities, intra-network consortia, the network as a whole or, in some cases, actors outside the network.

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Interactive forums and co-creation as core activities

- The core activity of a LN is to support opportunities for co-creation between the participants through their mutual interaction.
- Co-creation does not imply that the participants should have similar developmental **goals**; instead, they should find joint **objects** for development.
- Identifying joint objects for development calls for the use of developed procedures and tools at interactive forms in a LN.

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Different set-ups of interactive forums in learning networks

Position of participants	Allocation of knowledge	Typical actions of learning
Teacher and learners	One member of the network has more extensive expertise in a given area than the other members	The other members gain insight and encouragement for their own development work in that area
All teachers and learners	Several members of the network already have experiences in a given area	Benchmarking of experiences between those members presenting their practices serves as a learning opportunity for them
All learners	A network examines matters which are relatively new for all members	Explorative activities which help all members acquire greater expertise in the area in question are launched

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Context-dependency and system-dependency

- Mechanical benchmarking is not often possible in LNs, owing to the high context-dependency and system-dependency of the practices.

- **Context-dependency**: the characteristics of an environment of a unit determine how applicable any given practices may be in that unit.

- **System-dependency**: other practices adopted earlier in a unit affect applicability of any new practices in that unit.

Reflexive benchmarking

- Learning and innovations stem from differences and diversity.
- Learning from differences and diversity requires that parties are capable of identifying functional correspondences between them, where sensible comparisons can be made.
- The unit being compared is not regarded as a standard but rather as a “mirror” which reflects similarities and differences and helps place the practices of one’s own unit in a broader social and historical context.
- What is important is the use and evolution of dialogical methods rather than the construction of detailed sets of indicators and strict measurement systems.

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Significance of trust

- Building up a network and confidential interaction between participants usually requires a lot of time.
- Previous interaction and trust between participants makes it considerably easier to prepare and launch interactive forums.
- A LN needs a coordinator whose position is neutral in relation to core members of the network and who is able to make a long-term commitment to the network and its development.

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Significance of network composition

- The composition of the network determines what kinds of mirrors for exchange of experiences can be formed within the network.
- Relevant factors include the size of the network, its structure, and the similarity or diversity of the expertise of its members.
- Similarity of expertise may narrow the knowledge domain of the network, whereas diversity may prevent participants from understanding each other's situation, aims, language, concepts and values.
- Too diverse expertise is probably an easier problem to overcome through network activities than the problem of too similar expertise.

Significance of motives and expectations of the participants

- What motives and expectations the participants have for acting in the network and how much these differ between participants affect the prerequisites for co-creation in a LN.

- Because LNs are a new and seemingly complicated type of project, it may be more difficult to draw up cost-benefit assessments of participation in a project than in the more traditional types of project.

- The most important expected benefit for participants in interactive forums is not so much finding ready-made solutions for problems defined by the participating unit as redefining and re-contextualising the problems themselves.

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