Power and conflict in innovation platforms

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Power and conflict

Power asymmetries

Conflicts, negotiations and trust
Power asymmetries

• Power-relations exist, and can play a role, in every phase of the platform process. It is important to recognize these power dynamics and their effects.

• System innovations often require a change in power relations between stakeholders and associated institutions (which often entails conflicts).

• Gender relations are often characterized by strong power dynamics and therefore should receive explicit attention in innovation processes.
Ongoing tracking of relationships and changing membership is important for IP health

Research shows:

- Strong ties favour mutual learning and resource sharing
- Weak ties favour spread of new ideas
- Centralised network best for initial phase of deciding on collective action
- Decentralised network best for long term planning and problem solving
Stakeholder Analysis Tools
Social Network Analysis (SNA)

• SNA uses numbers to represent:
  - the presence or absence of a tie
  - the relative strength of a tie

• Structured interview / questionnaire / observation used to generate multiple matrices (i.e. communication, friendship, conflict, trust)

• Specialist software used to generate network graph
Negotiation and conflict resolution

Roles of the facilitator

• Empower weaker stakeholders
• Support negotiation
• Conflict resolution

If more powerful members dominate..

• Group diversity is not reflected
• Not all knowledge is used
‘Subjects’ have high interest but low power. How can we empower them?

- Participatory Video
- Role Play
- Participatory Rural Appraisal
- Links between Levels
- Use Evidence from Research
- Negotiation Skills Training
Empowering IP Members
Participatory video

Participatory Video Methodology Facilitator's Course
Empowering IP Members
Role Play

Goal of Method
By taking on the role of another, a stakeholder can become aware of their own assumptions and develop empathy.

- Provide each player written roles describing their character's goals and intentions - Do NOT script the dialog.
- Players should be aware only of their own roles.
- Assign the role of observer; observers report back on the goals and intents they perceive each character as having.
- Include reflection time to discuss as a group what everyone learned.
Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

- A label given to a family of participatory approaches and methods that emphasize local knowledge and enable local people to make their own appraisal, analysis, and plans.
- Uses group animation and exercises to facilitate information sharing, analysis, and action among stakeholders.
- Grew from RRA data collection techniques in the 70s.

TOOLS
- Group dynamics, e.g. learning contracts, role reversals, feedback sessions
- Sampling, e.g. transect walks, wealth ranking, social mapping
- Interviewing, e.g. focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, triangulation
- Visualization e.g. venn diagrams, matrix scoring, timelines.
Using research evidence

• Conflict between strong opinion holders can often be resolved by appealing to existing research evidence
• Requires perceived impartiality on part of researchers participating in platform
• Alternatively stakeholders can be involved in action research to see evidence themselves
Conflict, Negotiation and Trust
Conflict can be destructive, constructive or instructive.

• Conflict can help us better understand the ways we define problems and the consequences of our proposed solutions

Constructive Conflict
• Conflict means diverse stakeholder interests are represented at the decision making table
• Conflict helps to unearth new perspectives and to confront narrowly defined points of view. Conflict can help us see the consequences of our views through the eyes of those who disagree
• Conflict generates new alternatives and more options
Conflict, Negotiation and Trust
Conflict management styles

1. Competing. Assertive and uncooperative behaviour focused on personal concerns at the expense of others.
2. Accommodating. Unassertive and cooperative behaviour that neglects personal concerns in order to satisfy the concerns of others.
3. Avoiding. Unassertive and uncooperative behaviour that neither pursues personal interests or the interests of others.
4. Compromising. An intermediate position on both assertiveness and cooperation often referred to as splitting the difference, seeking a quick middle-ground position.

5. Collaborating. Both assertive and cooperative behaviours that emphasize working with the other party to satisfy both your concerns and theirs.
Establish trust and maintain open communication

Open communication depends on:

- People coming together as equals and on the basis of trust
- Listening with empathy
- Bringing assumptions and perceptions out into the open
Conflict, Negotiation and Trust
Resistance as a barrier to open communication

Recognise and Name the Masks of Resistance

*The angry mask* – use anger to prevent dialog

*The detail mask* – derail the conversation with peripheral detail or keeps asking for more details

*The time mask* – introduce delay tactics

*The intellectual mask* – refuse to deal with concrete realities

*The mask with no mouth* - other party is passive, hides reaction
Conflict management is a never ending cycle that includes:

- holding preliminary conversations to build trust and understanding
- deepening those conversations to identify and define the issues
- Look at issues from different perspectives
- engaging in mutual problem solving
- following-up to assure the results that were expected have been achieved.
Answers by participants to questions during the workshop
Which of the following is NOT a good reason for ensuring that all stakeholders groups are represented in an Innovation Platform?

A. To avoid biased decisions and actions
B. To avoid pushback from marginalized groups
C. To avoid elite capture
D. To avoid conflict between platform members
SNA categorizes the type of relationship between members of a platform. True or False?

A. True
B. False
For a role play to be effective, the ‘actors’ should be provided with a script. True or False?

A. True

B. False
Which of these is an appropriate role for the observers of a role play?

A. to provide feedback on the quality of the play
B. to reflect on and suggest how the situation could have been addressed more effectively
C. to help refine the script so it can be used more effectively in future
D. observers are an audience only
This module is associated with an elearning module on ‘Understanding, Facilitating and Monitoring Agricultural Innovation Platforms’ available at: http://learning.ilri.org/course/detail/24

The course was inspired by a series of briefs available at: https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/33667

See especially: http://hdl.handle.net/10568/34166
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