

A Tale of Two Projects That Never Were -The Case of JOLISAA

N. Sellamna

Summary

This paper reviews the differences between a partnership project as it was designed and as it was eventually conducted. The project aimed at inventorying and assessing local innovations in 3 African countries. The paper draws on several bodies of research to examine issues such as the role of coordination, power structure, and organisational interests, to comment on their impact on joint learning, partnership principles and the gradual backsliding in the project ambitions.

One of the main conclusions of the paper is that implications of a research project in partnership come in the way and limit the conditions of joint learning. A first conflict is that between a logic of control, inherent to project management, and a logic of learning, concomitant with any research process. A second conflict is between a logic of authority embedded in the asymmetry of power between project coordination and other project members, and a logic of research where there can be no argument of authority but only validity of argumentation. In terms of functioning of the project, this double edged conflict translates into a conflict between a logic of conflict resolution –as a necessary part of the joint learning process- and a logic of conflict avoidance –as part of short project management strategy.

Keywords: Project management, Joint Learning, Power asymmetry, Project partnership, Team work.

Introduction

The last decade has seen a mushrooming of projects, under conceptual labels as diverse as epistemic communities, communities of practice, communities of interest, learning communities, learning alliances, learning networks (Prasad Pant, 2009), as joint learning projects, learning partnerships, collaborative research projects, multi-stakeholder projects, or more simply as “partnership projects” between Southern and Northern organizations.

The resort to North-South research partnerships has been justified through various rationales: to generate results which project partners cannot achieve on their own (a so called ‘collaborative advantage’), to build Southern partners’ capacity, to access diminishing donor resources, by the need for the Northern partners to co-opt Southern institutions to bridge knowledge divides between North and South to help them link up to the Northern “knowledge societies” (Baud, 2003), etc..¹

Working in partnership is also a feature of interdisciplinary collaboration which is seen as necessary to gain understandings of contemporary societal and scientific challenges and develop new solutions to complex problems, an endeavour beyond the scope of any single

¹Alternatively, some observers see the capacity building need as reciprocal, partnerships being necessary also to build Northern partners’ capacities (Bradley, 2007).

discipline, research area or institution (Lungeanu, Huang and Contractor, 2014)². When these solutions are adopted beyond the boundaries of the collaborative process, they can become institutionalized in a wider field and thus “have the potential to transform institutional fields ... by acting as an important source of innovation” (Lawrence, Hardy and Phillips, 2002).

In this context of generalization of “partnership” projects in rural development, it is remarkable that so little research has been done on the functioning of teams working inside them, and difficulties arising from conflicts of interest or opposing visions. As de Jong et al. (2007) point out in the case of corporate business, “work teams can differ considerably in the extent to which they pursue activities related to learning and continuous improvement and ... these differences have important implications for team performance, ... Understanding the factors that promote or inhibit learning behaviours within a team has therefore become an important research agenda”. Such research is all the more relevant in the case of projects purportedly based on collective learning.

An important reason for this lack of interest in studying partnership projects is perhaps the very concept of “partnership”. Because of its ambiguity, it can be seen more as a label than as a valid research topic. The professional experiences it covers are then best approached from other, more scientifically relevant, perspectives: social networks, group and team dynamics, inter-institutional collaboration, inter-disciplinary research, etc...

Whatever the case, the issue of the articulation of “partnership” and “Joint Learning” in a research project should be a central concern because although they are not conceptually exclusive –all joint learning is to some extent a “partnership” - they are motivated by different rationales, at least in the rough-and-tumble world of development funding, where institutions have their own policies, interests, objectives and more or less hidden, sometimes conflicting agendas. If Joint Learning is often justified by needs for knowledge sharing for greater innovation, the choice of partnership is often explained by more down-to-earth objectives of collaborative advantage, easier access to funding, etc... A further dimension of this articulation is that it has to take place within a “project”, that is a context of time-boundedness, with a structure of contractual objectives, control mechanisms, results and deliverables.

This paper is a qualitative account of one such project –Jolisaa-, drawing concepts from different bodies of research, most notably from Actor Network Theory, Discourse Analysis, Inter-Organizational Research, Team Learning and Collaboration Studies, to examine whether it lived up to its ambitions.

²This even if, as Lungeanu et al. point out, interdisciplinarity of a project proposal does not necessarily require the need for a team because “scholars, by nature of their training, are able to tap into different pools of knowledge and produce interdisciplinary research without coming across the challenges of forming an interdisciplinary team”. This was certainly the case in Jolisaa.

Assuredly few projects, especially in rural development, live up to all their ambitions. The specific issue with “Joint Learning” projects is however that their falling short of initial ambitions should be a good learning opportunity, but for various reasons Jolisaa has not seized it. This paper attempts to fill that gap.

The Jolisaa project has produced results (case studies, papers, policy briefs) which are publicly available³. As in most projects, these products –notwithstanding their value in terms of added knowledge or as political instruments- cannot give insights into what went into the process of their production. In any project, final products can hide rationalizations, convenient shortcuts, embellishments, etc... This paper offers an insider view of this undocumented process. Eventually, as Scott-Smith (2013) summarizes, “development projects succeed or fail not on the basis of any inherent superiority or inferiority, but on the basis of the extent and durability of the alliances they create... This network of alliances is created not because a project is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, but because people and things are convinced that the project can advance their own interests, according to the role in the project they have been assigned” (p.5).When unchallenged, this conviction, thanks to articulate discourse, can produce what can only be called ‘development legends’, ie, somehow misleading stories of concepts successfully put to work.

The arguments developed in this paper are based on an analysis of a combination of personal experience of the project –of which I was a member-, review of project documents and exchanges between members during the project, as well as numerous personal discussions with them during and after the end of the project. In addition, the paper is informed by my understanding of North-South collaborative projects I have been involved in over the last two decades, mostly in capacity building projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a member of the project I, of course, share responsibility for what happened in the project. The interpretation of events remains however my own responsibility.

The paper will review how the project is described in the project document before examining successively the issues of Joint Learning, coordination, power relations and the assumption of partnership underlying the project.

The Tale of JOLISAA

The Joint Learning about Innovation Systems in African Agriculture project was funded by the European Union under its 7th Framework Programme. The project, in a nutshell, sought to increase understanding of agricultural innovation systems focusing on smallholders’ livelihoods and the articulation of local and global knowledge. As its web presentation⁴states, “JOLISAA’s goal was to assess how smallholders’ innovativeness,

³ See summary of project reports and results at:http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/92955_en.html

⁴<http://www.jolisaa.net/>

knowledge, capacities and other resources can be tapped into, strengthened and linked effectively to those of other stakeholders – public or private, local or global – to contribute to reducing rural poverty and improving food security in Africa”.

The overall, stepwise process, was to, first, identify a large set of innovations in each of the three Southern countries (Kenya, South Africa and Benin) in an inventory. A second step was to carry out a limited review of the inventory, to map the diversity of innovations according to types, domains, scales and timelines, and select a few cases in each country for an in-depth assessment based on agreed criteria. Once carried out, this assessment will be used to derive lessons and insights for policymakers in Agricultural Research for Development. The project document indicates that the lessons from the 3 Southern partners’ countries “have been synthesized by combining joint case-study assessment with capacity-strengthening and networking at various scales”.

The project document emphasizes that “the originality of the proposal is that joint iterative learning among project partners and with local/ national stakeholders is at the heart of the project’s operation, in the belief that a multi-stakeholder participatory assessment is more suited than a classical external assessment to identify a relevant agenda for future research, practice and policy, and to contribute to engaging stakeholders in changing their approach to innovation development”. The collective learning takes place around a research procedure starting with a collectively designed analytical framework used to build an inventory of innovations identified and described by the 3 Southern members, from which a sample was selected to carry out detailed case studies. This general procedure is supported by “platforms” at each level meant to foster Joint Learning. At the international level an invited group of professionals give feedback to JOLISAA members through virtual meetings. At the project level, a Steering Committee is reunited during Global Meetings or in Skype meetings ensures overall coordination and monitoring and attempts to build synergies between different project components (Work Packages). At the national level, local workshops are organized to review the process (project objectives and methodology, inventory, case studies, etc...). Throughout, email exchanges and physical meetings –when possible- kept formal and informal exchanges going.

In terms of its *research* dimension, the type of methodology to be followed is not clearly named. Action Research is used several times (7 quotes in the project document) to justify the project, but not explicitly as the overall project methodology. However, there is no doubt that the methodology described is a form of Action Research. The involvement of stakeholders in national and local project teams, the cycles of action-group reflection, the emphasis on Joint Learning, are all direct, if not explicitly stated, references to Action Research. This direct reference is illustrated by the systematic emphasis on project members’ experience in Action Research in the project document.

In terms of *process*, Joint Learning is an operating principle, guiding the project team in their interactions, and their interactions with their own institutions. “Networking activities by the

project will emphasize joint learning and dissemination of lessons learnt and will be closely linked to practical multi-stakeholder innovation processes on the ground. Learning will involve all project partners: those involved in the participatory development and assessment of case studies and members of the national and international networks. Links will be made to a wide pool of resource persons and experts of different institutions worldwide, who will participate in the international learning platform” (Project document). The Joint Learning process is clearly associated with a capacity building process. “The people that will be trained are based in different types of organisations, including research institutions, universities, NGOs, farmer organisations and government services. They will then be sharing their knowledge and skills within their respective institutions” (ibid).

In terms of expected *results*, project deliverables follow the structure of the project methodology, with one product for each phase of the methodology: “inventory of innovations”, “case studies” of each innovation selected for further study, “policy briefs”. But results cover also local capacity building, with a number of persons expected to be trained, and sets of training materials produced.

An important goal of Jolisaa was that the project as a whole was viewed as a capacity building mechanism (Jolisaa, 2009)⁵:

“The process of developing the case studies forms the heart of a capacity-development trajectory for local and national stakeholders... Objective 4 addresses the need to strengthen research capacities, but widens capacity-strengthening to other partners in innovation processes... most project efforts will revolve around the assessment of case studies, and the associated capacity-strengthening and networking....At the end of these workshops (which also correspond to the end of the project), the national innovation platform members will have developed their ability to play more active roles in facilitating innovation at the local, sub-national and national level, in brokering for research and extension services, and in advocating and building increased capacity for institutional change geared towards providing a more enabling institutional environment for innovation....”

So its ambitious aim is, through capacity building and networking, ‘to give African partners access to international fora and a voice in global matters:

“Developing an interconnected initiative, JOLISAA will mobilize substantial European and African capacity to develop cross-analyses among African countries. This will allow the identification of fundamental underlying processes, factor interactions and impacts that will jointly benefit Europe and African countries. Identification of knowledge gaps will enable progress in research and strengthen innovation and expertise in support of agricultural viability as well as Europe–Africa solidarity in addressing global challenges whose solution will require a capacity to design or strengthen efficient innovation systems, such as climate

⁵A further indication of this is the recurrent reference in the project document to the experience of capacity building of all project members, from North and South.

change, biodiversity, building healthier relationship between Science, Technology and Civil Society, participatory democracy and good public governance, etc.”

The project’s management structure combines a Steering Committee (SC) made up of representatives of all 7 project partners and of the donor, chaired by the project coordinator, and an Advisory and Networking Board (ANB). The SC is “the main body concerned with the overall direction of the project”, responsible, among others, of “supporting the project coordinator in fulfilling obligations towards the EC”, monitoring quality and quantity of project outputs, and “handling any tensions and conflicts that could not be dealt with properly at other levels”. The ANB is an international body made up of members, “selected in such a way as to form a cross-section of key institutions and stakeholders in the Agricultural Innovation Systems arena”. Its roles are “to give feedback on project concepts, activities and products”, “to expand and facilitate networking, and to provide strong support for project efforts, and to “facilitate linkages with other ongoing projects and dialogue with similar international fora”.

Early Hiccups in the Tale

Even a cursory reading of the Jolisaa project document shows that the project –as many other partnership projects- seems to have been shaped by the addition of currently fashionable concepts and theories contributed mostly by the Northern partners⁶, each with their own concerns, interests and strategies, but little guarantee of a common understanding of the overall package, or indeed the exact meaning of the concepts.

Despite project members having agreed to a common protocol –if not all collaboratively produced it- the experience shows that they did not share the same expectations, the same understanding⁷, nor did they have the same level of commitment to the collaboration and the decisions made. Such misunderstandings and conflicting interests are unavoidable in the case of widely differing members’ institutional set up, professional standards and organizational cultures. The make-up of the Jolisaa partnership was especially complex. Of the 7 partners, three were Universities -one from the North, two from the South-, two were research institutions -one national, one international-, and two were Dutch foundations with an international mandate. Two of the Southern members were associated with one of the Northern foundations through an international network. Differences in size were also an issue, ranging from less than 10 in the smallest to 6500 staff members in the largest. Finally, although each partner was subjected to calls to demonstrate impact by their own governing

⁶According to two of the partners, all 3 Southern institutions were co-opted late in the process of proposal development (pers. com.). They were invited to a meeting in Europe where –the draft having been written- they had no possibility to amend it significantly, most notably in budgeting.

⁷An outstanding example is the meaning of two central concepts of the project: “innovation” which kept coming back throughout the project, and “Joint Learning” whose meaning was never actually settled in either conceptual or operational terms.

bodies, this impact is not measured by the same indicators, especially the importance of publications for career advancement of project members. These differences have important repercussions on members' decisions: how available is each partner's representative for project work, how close are the relations between some project partners, how important is the project for each partner, how easy it is for each partner to mobilize personnel from their own institutions for the project, what kind of methodology is favoured, etc... Not least of these repercussions is the difference in individual members' dependency on the project. Those working in larger organizations, especially in the North, have greater opportunities for collaboration within their own organization. As Lungeanu & al (2004) found out in their study on the assembly of interdisciplinary teams and its impact on performance, "after accounting for all other effects, the marginal benefit of collaboration decreases when a researcher already has many collaborators (i.e. is working in a big team)".

Project team diversity offers both a potential for enrichment and creativity and a risk of disruption and conflict. The challenge for the project –and more specifically for the project coordinator- was therefore to harness this potential and put it to work for the best of the project.

The misunderstandings between team members, and the realization of project shortcomings, became clear from the very beginning. Two major points were finances and conceptual framework. As early as the first global meeting, it was obvious that there would be difficulties implementing all planned activities within partners' budgets (especially Southern partners'). The project's complex multi-level system of teams operating on two continents and in several countries on each continent excluded frequent face-to-face meetings, due to the high costs of travel and meeting. These led to adaptations of both methodology and deadlines⁸.

Although budget constraints impacted negatively on the project, all difficulties were not due to financial resource shortages. For example, the international team meant to provide feedback was an important component of the project's Joint Learning system but it never functioned as planned. Few members provided feedback, too rarely and without much reaction from the project team themselves who made little use of the feedback. Most importantly, even the project's Steering Committee could not meet often and in good enough conditions to fulfil its role. Skype meetings were organized, but these were limited by time constraints and poorer quality of internet connections for Southern partners.

Another issue that delayed project team work was the conceptual framework. Originally drafted by one of the Northern partners, to be gradually adapted through exchanges

⁸For example, one decision taken was the merging of the initially separate steps of inventory and light analysis to form an enriched inventory-cum-assessment of a series of diverse types of innovation cases.

between project members, the process of its development was long and tedious⁹. The delay in coming up quickly with a collectively agreed upon framework had a delaying impact on decisions about project methodology. Decisions about what methods to use for inventory of innovations and their assessment had to be done while the conceptual framework was still unclear, which in effect rendered the conceptual framework redundant. The project launch workshop highlighted the difference of visions among members. The member leading the development of the overall assessment framework presented a quantitative model, deemed much too formal and complex by other members who opted for a more qualitative approach.

A Tale of Failed Joint Learning

“Although human beings are endowed with both desire and ability for learning, collections of interdependent individuals, whether small groups or large organizations, do not learn automatically” (Edmondson, 2002). Failure to learn, or to learn efficiently as a group, may be due to various causes. In the case of Jolisaa, the following sections comment on definitional causes, organizational causes, interpersonal causes and leadership causes.

What is Learning Anyway? The Project’s Failure to Define Learning

Although it is embedded in the very name of the project, strangely enough, Joint Learning was not clearly defined in the project document¹⁰. The latter focuses more on the profile of project members than on how exactly they are going to learn jointly or indeed what is meant by Joint Learning. Two assumptions seem to underpin this absence of definition.

The first assumption is, presumably, that well qualified and experienced professionals working together on a project can only learn jointly, with no need to further explain what “learning jointly” meant in terms of outcomes or methodology. “The consortium brings together individuals with a unique set of skills and attitudes which will enrich the project: strong conceptual thinking, pragmatism, facilitation, team spirit, capacity to think and act in synergy, networking, field orientation, attention to and respect for local people and their cultures and contexts, pedagogy and commitment to joint learning and mutual capacity-strengthening.”” all activities within the individual Work Packages are geared towards optimizing knowledge generation by building on existing initiatives, networks and available knowledge about agricultural/rural innovation and local/traditional knowledge” (Project document).

⁹This was partly due to the fact that the draft had been produced by students, rather badly written and confused.

¹⁰The issue of conflicts between the rationale of project management and innovation processes is examined specifically in *N. Sellamna (forthcoming): The Interplay Between Local and Project Based Innovation Processes*

The focus on members' qualifications and experience is to some extent understandable. Project documents are firstly meant to convince the donor that the candidates are able to implement the project and deserve the funding they apply for, not to expound sophisticated concepts or detail methodologies –this is the stuff of earlier (or later) publications. Here again, the assumption is that if members are qualified and experienced, then they are able to operationalize their own concepts.

The second assumption was perhaps that Joint Learning is implied, even conflated with the project's organizational structure and the different entities and events planned by the project and during which Joint Learning was supposed to take place: international team, national team, JILAC. Yet one should not confuse structure and function. Experience in Jolisaa shows that even if events take place, Joint Learning may not happen if objectives, processes and conditions are not adequate.

There are undoubtedly difficulties in assessing learning.

One is the *temporal* dimension. As Gambarotto, Rangone and Solari (2001) indicate, "we can study learning only through its effects, the change of behaviour, which may be affected by other causes. In addition, stocked knowledge may remain veiled for a long time and activated successively, when embedded in the 'right' context".

A second difficulty is the *contextual* dimension of a "project". Boström (2012) points out those central characteristics of projects that make them hostile to effective learning. The fact that they are temporary organizations puts constraints on learning. Time pressure, to achieve specific objectives and deliver products within a given time frame, forces members to have a 'task oriented' frame of mind and strive to "get the work done". Project members are delegated to the project by their own organization and must return to it. Their organization has other demands on its staff and thus an interest in terminating a project quickly and reallocating personnel to other activities or new projects. An important constraint is that effective learning requires trust between members; trust has an effect on how members share their tacit knowledge in a learning process. And projects offer little time to develop that trust, if that trust does not already exist from previous collaborations.

A third difficulty is the *terms* upon which the value of learning can be assessed. "Its ability to solve problems can give way to its value as a process in itself: learning cannot fail, it can be argued, since its 'failures' serve simply to produce other opportunities for learning... Thus, like a snake biting its own tail, learning is a process that feeds itself" (Sellamna, 1999). So in a general sense, one could argue that whenever people work together there is always « joint learning », whatever the case and whatever their performance¹¹. It can be argued

¹¹Dillenbourg (1999) writing on collaborative learning notes that the concept has become fashionable, and like all fashionable concepts it becomes used abusively to describe more or less anything. He adds that the problem with such wide usage is that it becomes nonsense to talk about the effects of collaborative situations if any

that learning from a project, even if it is not documented, will be carried over to other projects. However this inter-project learning process is also in doubt. Boström (2012), for example, notes that uncertainty is a central feature of projects. People may leave the organization for good and do not feed their experiences into new projects or into their own organization. This is especially the case when the project involves people working on a “consultancy” basis, with little integration into the project’s member organization (this issue of “embeddedness” is dealt with later). Furthermore, uncertainty arises with the lack of standardized solutions when a new project is initiated. This forces project members to develop novel solutions every time (Boström).

A further difficulty is the *articulation* between individual and Joint Learning. Writing about learning in economic systems, Gambarotto, Rangone, and Solari say that “the theorisation of processes of learning in systems larger than the individual poses some conceptual difficulties that reside chiefly in the connection between logical levels (the individual, the organization, the system). On the other hand, applied work has looked at indicators that proxy channels and performance but has neglected the process by which learning occurs”. They define collective learning as “a ‘co-ordinated change of competencies’, a structural change allowing for an adaptation of the economy to its context by the acquisition of new knowledge”. It is “both the process of improving productive capabilities ... and co-ordination schemes among actors”.

One can add that Joint Learning is not always an altruistic endeavour, it is also an *investment* for individuals. It has a *cost* –in terms of time required by collective processes, of financial incentives for members to engage into the project’s learning endeavour at the expense of their other engagements, of personal efforts required by project activities, etc.... When these costs are perceived to exceed the value of the returns (knowledge gained, skills developed, publication potential, career prospects, etc...), individuals withdraw from the process or minimize their personal investment in the Joint Learning effort. This is especially the case when individuals are concurrently working in other projects that may offer better incentives. These comments are particularly relevant in the case of Jolisaa.

In the above definition, Joint Learning is not simply a medium for individual learning but also, and more importantly, about building the capacity of individuals and groups. In the following sections, we will look at both these.

In Jolisaa, the challenge for Coordination in promoting Joint Learning was great. Coordination has to create a work climate conducive to productive collective behaviour in the project, with two, potentially contradictory, stakes: nurturing and strengthening the voluntary personal involvement that is essential in collective learning, and exercising

situation is labelled as collaborative. Indeed, a concept that explains everything in every situation becomes useless as a concept.

coercion on individuals if necessary to force them to conform to project rules, regulations and deadlines. It is a potential conflict between the rationale of Joint Learning and that of project management. This makes the position of the Coordinator very difficult: he is liable to attract either the sympathy that the first stake inspires or the animosity that the second stake causes. As Babnick et al. (2014) point out, “the occurrence of learning behaviour of team members is determined by task variety and significance, and by people-oriented leadership. Task-oriented team leadership has a negative influence on the learning process of team members”. The challenge for coordination is therefore to find the right balance between the two types of leadership so as not to impair members’ ability to learn. Most importantly, in the case of Jolisaa, the structure of the project provides for several layers of leadership (Coordinator, Country Team, Work Package, Case Study Team), each with its own leadership roles and responsibilities. A major challenge was therefore to avoid interference between these layers.

How Do We Learn? The Project’s Search for a Joint Learning Model

Collective reflection is essential for –and synonymous with- Joint Learning. It is also a central mechanism in capacity building, especially when it is intended for teams, as in the case of Jolisaa. But for Joint Learning to take place there needs to be willingness to engage in introspection, and review people’s attitudes and behaviour. Joint Learning requires us to distance ourselves from project “activities” and focus on team processes. « Reflexivity is the key means through which action research seeks to provoke collective awareness and disarrange beliefs and values among participants. Allowing for reflexivity provides a space for opening up questions, debate and assumptions and for discussing differences » (Westling et al., 2014).

West (2000) suggests that the process of reflexivity enhances innovation and performance in teams. He defines it as the "extent to which group members overtly reflect upon the group's objectives, strategies and processes, and adapt them to current or anticipated endogenous or environmental circumstances" (West, 1996, p.559). West (2000) makes a distinction between “task reflexivity”, ie, the extent to which teams discuss their objectives, develop strategies, and adapt them to current or anticipated circumstances, and “social reflexivity”, ie, the extent to which teams assure good conflict handling, provide support among team members, and promote a healthy climate. Reflexivity therefore balances out task and people orientation and ensures that all dimensions of group work are looked at critically.

If we accept this definition, it is obvious that there was little true reflexivity in Jolisaa. Workshops were mainly classic business-like meetings where progress was presented and

reviewed, and next steps planned. There was little in the way of true return on experience, introspection or iterations between review of experience and conceptual framework¹².

Partners only paid attention to Joint Learning as a concept nearly half way through the project, with an attempt to produce a “position paper”. But when the position paper was finally produced, too late, it was never actually used to guide the functioning of the project, and became a “product” of the project, not a guideline for partners.

The organisational structure assumed to allow Joint Learning did not work as expected, most notably the JILAC, which could have given feedback to Jolisaa members on progress and coherence of their work. JILAC was activated twice –at the beginning and at the end- with little participation and little use of contributions. JILAC did not help in Joint Learning precisely for these reasons: the contributions made by its members were not reflected upon by Jolisaa members and integrated into decisions. In short, Jolisaa went on accumulating definitions and various comments without making clear choices.

In this business-as-usual process, passing on and acquiring information from others on past activities, and seeking consensus on future ones by all were misconstrued as “learning”.

Thus by stripping meetings down to the bare essentials of information sharing and planning, the JOLISAA team reduced Joint Learning to a simple review process. What was missing was the documentation of the work and change processes within JOLISAA, which are essential to Joint Learning, meant as the co-creation of knowledge, and a change of attitudes and behaviour, that is an increased ability to adapt and respond to the project’s changing context.

... And Where Are The Learners? The Project’s Failure to Mobilize Partners in Learning

The presence of willing and active learners is essential to Joint Learning. First of all, the learners must have ample opportunity to interact with each other, and encouragement when they do so. But this, in itself is not enough; other conditions must be met for Joint Learning to function effectively. Research on motivation in collaborative learning (Sanna et al., 2015; Lewis et al, 2010)) shows that the psychological drive of individuals to engage in learning faces several challenges that interfere with the social processes of learning. Personal challenges are incompatibilities between personality characteristics that can have an impact on social relationships, differences in respective goals, priorities and expectations, styles of working and communicating, etc... Psychological challenges are caused by the cognitive processes involved in creating a common ground in problem solving, negotiating different perspectives, handling complex concepts, etc... Sanna et al. add that culturally diverse teams –like Jolisaa- can face other challenges related to language, communication and social interaction styles.

¹² To be fair, there was indeed some iteration between the set of definitions of innovation outlined in the conceptual framework and the review of innovation cases compiled during the inventory. The iteration served to guide the project’s typology of innovations for the case study assessment. However, this iteration only worked only one way, no lessons from the project experience were fed into the conceptual framework.

These different challenges dogged the experience of Joint Learning in Jolisaa. As pointed out, the way the project's overall methodology was deployed did not facilitate Joint Learning. The steps of the methodology (developing and agreeing on a conceptual framework, building and analysing an inventory, developing a methodology and conducting the case assessment) overlapped and no step ended with a clear cut decision that helped to build the next step. At each stage, participation was very unequal, contributions piled up, again with little common ground defined. This was even more obvious in the National Workshops, where participants –meant to be involved in the project fieldwork- changed from one workshop to another. As much as the budgetary constraints, a destabilising effect on local partners' active involvement in the project was the uncertainties and ambiguities about the project's ability to remunerate their participation, and on what basis. For them Jolisaa did not exist in-between meetings, so there was discontinuity and little integration into their professional context. In general, there was therefore no consolidation of learning in Jolisaa, no cumulative effect that is a crucial element of learning. One of the side effects is that the project members had to go over the same background contents to bring newcomers up to speed.

The Tale of Project “Coordination”: Between Project Director and School Headmaster

Project Coordination is not an easy role, especially in the case of an international, intercultural and interdisciplinary project. In European funded projects, the Coordinator's role is described as essentially one of overall project management: “to receive the Community financial contribution and to distribute it in accordance with the consortium and grant agreement”; “to keep the records and financial accounts relevant for the Community financial contribution and to inform the Commission of its distribution...”; “to be the intermediary for efficient and correct communication between the participants and ... report regularly to the participants and to the Commission on the progress of the project”¹³. It is however important, not least because the Coordinator is to “monitor the compliance by participants in direct action with their obligations”.

Further than that, the Coordinator, in his function of coordination¹⁴, has no other explicit role. The “Coordinator” title is therefore a bit of a misnomer¹⁵. He “coordinates” in a general sense, but his prerogatives make him really the project director, controlling access to finances by other project members and serving as the only line of communication with the Donor. Even the members' reports to the Donor have to be channelled through the Coordinator, who can demand rewrites. It is therefore through the assessment submitted by the Coordinator that the Donor forms an opinion about the performance of the project as a whole, and of its members. This sets the limits of the concept of “partnership”, especially in research projects. The Coordinator, and therefore his employing organization, are the real

¹³Article 25 of the Rules for Participation in Framework Programme 7

¹⁴ . Obviously the coordinator as a person has other roles. As representative of his organization he is in charge of a set of activities ('work package'). Thus the same person can draw on several functions to shape his power/status in the project (see later in the paper).

¹⁵. In projects, “coordinator” seems to be increasingly used as a softer, more politically correct title than “manager”. It implies somehow that in a partnership project, no one “manages”. But getting rid of the harder overtones of ‘management’ does not do away with the reality of power asymmetries.

initiators and drivers of the project –and as such, accountable to the Donor-. Although the project makes abundant use of the concept of “partnership”, it is really a contract between the Donor and the lead organization, who appoints the Coordinator. This means, *in fine*, that the other “partners” are at best service providers and do not have to be involved in all decision making. The issue of “partnership” in collaborative projects is dealt with later.

With such ambiguities around the meaning of “partnership” and “coordination”, the Jolisaa Coordinator was not –and could by no means be- a “neutral” person, limiting himself to the facilitation of interactions between equal partners. Although the job description does not give him any specific role –or decision making power- over questions of substance (methodological choices, type of activities, etc...), the framework conditions set by his job description put him in a position to determine outcomes: control over transfer of financial resources to members, strict enforcement of rules instead of negotiation and amendments, call on team members’ employers to use their authority to control and discipline their employees, etc...

In the case of Jolisaa, several other important features of the project gave the Coordinator disproportionate power over other project members.

First of all, the Coordinator’s organization was leader of a Work Package that is central to the project’s overall methodology. The four tasks of the Work Package¹⁶ -Inventory and classification of Innovation Systems (IS) experiences, Selection of IS cases and validation of the assessment approach, Collaborative Case-Study Assessment and Lessons learnt on the potentials and limitations of IS- are, in fact, the very structure of the project methodology. Being his organization’s representative in the project, the same person combines therefore the functions of overall project coordination with those of leader of most activities that structure the project, becoming, so to speak, judge and jury. Most importantly, the Coordinator is an experienced researcher with his own views and preferences in research methodology, and not a neutral, fly-on-the-wall observer. Consciously or unconsciously, he can be expected to use his leadership to advance his preferences.

Second, for an unknown reason, no mid-project evaluation was planned in Jolisaa. This can be interpreted as an unfortunate and somewhat strange oversight. It can also be interpreted more positively as a sign of the Donor’s trust towards project members, not wanting to burden them further with the weight of a formal evaluation. Whatever the case, added to the fact that the international learning group set up to advise and give feedback to project members did not function regularly, this left project members without any different, fresh perspectives from outsiders, opinions that could help mitigate the effects of the project’s unbalanced power structure.

Third, the Steering Committee did not function often enough to keep up with emerging issues and provide enough direction. High costs of traveling between two continents made face-to-face meetings much too expensive for the project; the Committee meetings had to piggyback on other meetings and go through an agenda much too full for the time available.

¹⁶Jolisaa project document - Annex I - Description of Work

Taken individually, each of these features can undoubtedly be rationalized away as something positive for the project. Put together however, they create a human situation where power relations are played out with no checks and balances. This issue is dealt with next.

A Tale of Learning and Power

At this stage, it is necessary to enlarge the discussion of influences of power asymmetries on Joint Learning and consider them in the broader context of the project's power structure, to highlight the often implicit influence of project design on project members' attitudes and behaviour. Does the project's formal power structure encourage Joint Learning?

Two strands of power theory are most useful: that dealing with the bases of social power, as described by the much cited, old but still relevant, work of French and Raven (1959) and the more radical perspective, represented by Lukes (1974). The two are complementary, in that the latter puts the personal characteristics of social influence into the context of the structural framework into which power is exercised.

French and Raven propose a model describing five bases of social power¹⁷.

Reward power stems from the ability of a person to offer positive incentives, for example material or non-material benefits. *Legitimate power* is based on the recognition of the right of a person to require a change of behaviour and one self's own obligation to comply. For the person who holds this right, it is based on the ability to validate or approve behaviour based on acceptance of cultural values and social structure. *Referent power* is power that emerges from a person identifying with another person, admiring him and considering him as a model to emulate. It is power associated with the desire to access a high prestige group. *Expert power* is based on a recognition that the person exercising power has superior insight, skills or knowledge about what is best on an issue, be it technical, conceptual or simply a required change of behaviour. *Coercion power* emanates from a person's ability to threaten others with negative consequences unless they change behaviour.

These forms of power –singly or in combination- are how social power is shaped. It is interesting to examine power asymmetries in the light of these power models. In the case of the project, the Coordinator's legitimate power is undoubted, both in theory and practice. He has the right to reject plans, practices, reports, etc.... Although the Coordinator may not have formally the power to reward beyond what is already planned for in the project, he has the legitimate power to coerce, by blocking the provision of funding and even, more radically, by terminating the involvement of any project members if they do not conform, even if it is conformity to his own judgement about what is best, and not to any specific contractual item of the project. This is by simple virtue of being the sole donor's interlocutor. Expert power could be considered to be held by all members within their area of

¹⁷ Additionally to these five bases, French and Raven added later a sixth one, *informational power*, which is the ability of a Supervisor to explain persuasively to the subordinate what should be done and why, convincing the latter to change his behavior (Raven, 2008).

competencies (in project parlance, the *Work Packages* they lead). Indeed, this expertise is the reason why they are part of the project in the first place. But this potential power afforded by expertise is superseded by the legitimate, and coercion, powers of the Coordinator, when and if their expertise challenges his judgement of what is best. All project members have, to a greater or lesser extent, referent power by virtue of their own personal qualities or, more generally, simply by being part of a project with a high profile membership. More subtly perhaps, referent power can manifest itself in the ability of some members to co-opt others, by virtue of their greater ability to articulate concepts, develop projects and access funding of projects from which they would otherwise be excluded. Lungeanu et al. (2014) for example, writing on the assembly of interdisciplinary teams, point out that senior researchers, with longer experience have had time to build scientific and technical capital as well as social capital, and are therefore more likely to find collaborators for projects. Because of their seniority and tenure, they are also more able to take the risks associated with collaborative research. Moreover, researchers with a high H-Index¹⁸ and from a higher institution tier are more likely to be sought after by researchers from the opposite end of the publication and institution spectrum, for both symbolic and instrumental reasons –access to funding, new knowledge, publication opportunities, etc...

Social power is therefore not shaped by the interactions between free and equal Joint Learners –or indeed through expertise or any notion of what is right or wrong- but through the interplay of multiple layers of power of which the learners may not even be aware.

To understand the importance of these overarching constraints, Luke’s several dimensions of power are useful.

To Lukes (1974), power plays out in a context which we have not defined ourselves; there are therefore several dimensions of power, each with a different locus. The first dimension is where power is direct and observable. The powerful is, so to speak, whoever wins an argument and determines an outcome. The second dimension is where agendas are set and controlled. The agenda also decides what can be argued and shapes the context in which decisions are made. This type of power is therefore the ability to set the agenda under which observable behaviour takes place. The third dimension is the deepest, one where desires and beliefs are shaped. It is, so to speak, the ability to create the stage inside which other power dimensions play out. This type of power shapes what actors want to do by manipulating their consciousness.

It is not difficult to see the relevance of this theory of power dimensions for the Jolisaa project and its influence on members’ behaviour, including their conception of “Joint Learning”. It is fair to say that the project was thought out and submitted to donors to benefit from the then dominant discourse on partnership and joint learning in both the general development area and the more specific area of innovation systems. This discourse fits well with what Mosse (2003) called a ‘master metaphor’ in the case of participation. Master metaphors in development (whether “participation”, “empowerment”, “capacity development”, or “innovation”) frame all issues and act as an interpretive device. In operational terms, this device helps define project members’ areas of thinking and action; it

¹⁸The H-index refers to the productivity and impact of a researcher, on the basis of the number of citations.

defines and “protects sets of representations, which in turn serve to interpret activities, measure performance and define success” (ibid).

In the case of Jolisaa, ‘joint learning’ and ‘partnership’ continued to operate as simple metaphors even after their failure as operating principles became clear to all members, as if the only way to justify the continued existence of the project was precisely to gently backslide from the “real” to the metaphorical¹⁹. Thus the adjustment of project ambitions was done not through explicit decisions in an open joint learning process, but through implicit downscaling of concepts, to avoid potential conflicts arising from discussion of causes and responsibilities (see for example the “why bother” attitude in the next section of the paper).

But why do project members conform, sometimes even when they are forced to act against their will and their stated objectives? Especially in a Joint Learning project, where members are assumed to develop and exercise reflexive awareness which, one would think, helps unravel metaphors, put things into perspective and free their room for action. Why was there no greater resistance, or at least more open expression of discontent?

An obvious answer is that, as argued earlier, there was no Joint Learning of a reflexive type in the project, but simple technical review and planning meetings. Discontent and disappointment with the way the project was heading were expressed privately, but never found their way into a collective discussion²⁰. To some extent, one could say that there was an implicit consensus not to put them in the open. But why?

A Tale of Three Terrors

Development professionals are not mindless people singing to the tune of some unseen musician. As mentioned earlier, Jolisaa members were aware of the conceptual, organizational and managerial shortcomings of their project. But to be true, the professional and career interests of project members are not incompatible with development metaphors. Indeed, many metaphors are constructed by the professionals themselves. Working within the context defined by a metaphor does not prevent development professionals from advancing their personal and organisational interests, but they have to accommodate at least three external threats.

Dependency and Conformity, or Learning Under a Sword of Damocles

It has become common to say that the economic crisis is hitting hard all organizations and forcing them to seek external funding. For this reason there is a fear of donor’s reaction that

¹⁹In the case of the « participatory development » metaphor, Mosse (2003) writes that « even where they do not direct action, it is essential that policy theory and project models be sustained as legitimising ideas ». In terms of adherence to policy models, he adds that « development actors work hardest of all to maintain coherent representations of their actions as instances of authorized policy, because it is always in their interest to do so » (Mosse, 2004).

²⁰ There was at least one exception. The author asked for the inclusion of one item in the agenda of the Steering Committee’ Skype meeting, to discuss issues of ‘lines of communication’.

may act as a deterrent to the expression of conflict, especially in a system of competitive grants. This fear may or may not be justified, but organizations are not all in the same situation of dependency. Large organizations benefitting, even for part of their budget, from government funding have “resource advantages that enable them to develop a higher absorptive capacity (the ability to accumulate external knowledge) in their own teams without relying on external collaborations” (Lungeanu et al, 2014) This is certainly true of at least 3 Jolisaa partners (two from the North, one from the South) who benefit from significant public funding. Rauh (2010), reviewing the Resource Dependence perspective on international development aid writes that “organizations are interdependent with other organizations with which they exchange monetary or physical resources, information, or social legitimacy. These asymmetrical relationships often bring organizations up against conflicting demands, where satisfying one group’s demands may come at the expense of another”. Partnership members lacking in essential resources will seek to establish relationships with (i.e., be dependent upon) others in order to obtain needed resources. Interdependence between partners goes therefore along with their common but unequal dependence on a donor, and contributes towards deterring open conflict, for fear of crippling the project, alienating organizations and donors one may need later.

Learning and Risk Taking, or Why Bother

To learn and improve individually and collectively, it is essential to reflect critically on current and past performance. But group learning is hampered by several inter-personal risks felt by group members. These fears are well documented in the social psychology literature: the fear that their behaviour affects the image they project to others; anxiety caused by uncertainty about the outcome of their actions when they have no control over processes, or by the fear of being judged or evaluated by their peers and their superiors, the wish to maintain their own and others' face, all inhibit sharing negative feedback, especially in a formal context.

As Edmonson (2002) points out, “one solution to minimizing risk to one’s image is simply to avoid engaging in interpersonal behaviours for which outcomes are uncertain. The problem with this solution is that it precludes learning”.

In the case of development projects in a partnership mode, a further issue discouraging risk taking is the *lack of common formal professional standards* –as opposed to those existing, at least formally, in the partner organizations implementing the project. Especially in projects – like Jolisaa- whose members have different institutional profiles and domains of work (academic research, development research, informal training, extension, etc...) the perception of what is right or wrong in terms of standards differs considerably. For members with a long experience of project work, there is certainly a *blasé* mentality (a “*why bother*”, “*I’ve seen worse*” type of attitude) about project standards that discourages them from voicing any critical assessments. For members with an academic background and motivated by the project publication potential and recognition by peers, their failure to impose on their

non-research partners methodologies likely to yield exploitable 'data' leads to a similar attitude.

This “why bother” attitude is also a result of institutional disillusion with a partnership, when members have invested time, efforts and ideas into a project and see no return on investment and no prospect for project improvement. The project can easily become a trap: too late and/or too ‘unprofessional’²¹ to exit, and too high transaction costs to stay on. The risk is the negative impact on the reputation of institutions and individual members, and their track record by association with the project. The only position then is to keep costs at an acceptable level by minimizing involvement in project activities and avoiding conflicts likely to make things worse.

Learning and Reputation, or The Fear of Shooting Ourselves in The Foot

Individual as well as institutional reputation is crucial for credibility, especially for researchers. Research organisations are increasingly dependent on project funding; researchers have to compete with each other in order to receive research funding. For individuals, an established research reputation plays a role as an indicator of quality and trustworthiness, and can therefore impact on overall visibility and citation of their publications. Entering into open conflict and possible negative impact on the project’s reputation carries the risk of undermining the ability to publish, have academic impact and, more practically, to attract projects.

The potential of the project for academic publication was an issue in Jolisaa, and discussed several times, especially with regard to data ownership. Southern partners, in charge of assessing innovation case studies in the field made it clear that no publication using that data should be initiated without their approval and co-authorship. This created a situation of inter-dependency whereby members needed each other to produce publishable data and possibly co-author papers. In these conditions, open conflict is counter-productive, as it compromises both the option of co-publication and that of its credibility to outsiders, even before it materializes.

Yet, in the end, the relationship between power and learning in partnership projects is not so much an issue of (inevitable) power asymmetries as one of how partners deal with conflict.

A Tale of Muted Conflict, Trust and Authority

Conflict is a common occurrence with diverse project teams –sometimes destructive, sometimes constructive. It is part of working in groups and teams, especially when this diversity is inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural, such as in Jolisaa. There

²¹The ‘unprofessional’ argument was often raised in private discussions between some members, including with the author’s own employer: “we cannot opt out after we’ve used up x% of the project budget; what would the donor think? What would become of our credibility?”

are different ways to approach conflict in projects, depending on whether one considers conflict as a positive or negative feature.

In general, interpersonal conflict can be related to differences in values, attitudes, needs, expectations, perceptions, resources and personalities. Reviewing research on the subject, Verma (1998) says that in team projects, conflict can be over different visions of the project, administrative procedures, budget allocation, etc... "Individuals attempt to manage interpersonal conflict in a variety of ways, depending on the relative importance and intensity of the conflict, the time pressure for resolving the conflict, the position taken by the players involved, and the motivation to resolve conflict on a long-term or a short-term basis". Conflict resolution techniques "range from the power-based steamroller approach to a more defensive, diplomatic, and tactical approach (and)... variations of avoidance, give-and-take negotiation, collaboration, and problem solving" (ibid). The choice of technique is ultimately a decision to be made between two contradictory desires: desire to achieve project goals and desire to maintain good long-term relationships with project members. In development projects, this later desire is pervasive, as it is underscored by a need by all partners to access funding, for which they, increasingly, need partners, especially "big" partners with sufficient clout and access to Donors. Maintaining good relationships means keeping conflict under tabs, with a risk of resorting to a wooden language reminiscent of political correctness²².

But conflict can be healthy for projects. In her review of research on inter-organizational relations Tracy (2004) even suggests that "contradictions are inescapable, normal and, in some cases, to be embraced". Indeed, conflict can be an important source of learning because it brings to light underlying issues, force project members to confront them and make concerted choices. As Verma says, "in some situations, an increase in conflict actually improves performance. Stimulating conflict is considered a proactive approach that requires up-front initiative aimed at minimizing the impact of potential negative conflict and avoiding costly patching-up operations later in the project life cycle" (ibid). For this however, project members –and at the forefront, the project coordinator- need to accept that conflict is desirable and a potential source of creativity. In this case, the role of the project coordinator is to encourage it and manage it.

A growing body of research shows that collaborative research and development teams are confronted with conflict situations. A research conducted by Schulze et al. (2014) among 152 researchers showed that conflict can be a strong driver of performance in innovation teams and that "democratic" conflict resolution techniques are not necessarily the best. But the highest performing teams are transparent in how they deal with conflict in order to maintain

²²Keeping conflict under tabs can be explained by the courtesy and mutual respect due to "partners", but also, as argued earlier, by the fear of being seen as a troublesome member (by other partners as well by one's own employing organization), to be kept out of future projects. Perversely enough, it can also be justified by the need to remain "professional" whatever the situation, ie, keeping a 'never complain' attitude, even in the face of adverse conditions, attitude for which a compensation expected from partners is to 'never explain'.

strong working connections in the long term. They use the “problem-solving approach”²³ significantly more than the low performer teams. Even if the approach is more time-consuming, it involves more collaboration from, and integration of, project members. Through this, stronger team bonds can be built and longer term negative effects of conflict can be limited. Conflict resolution can therefore be itself a learning opportunity.

A somewhat different angle is taken by de Jong et al. (2007). They start by pointing out a central problem for teams: “On the one hand, power asymmetry within a team seems to stifle team learning behaviours. On the other hand, power asymmetries exist in virtually all teams and particularly in those teams where opportunities for members to learn from one another are the greatest”. How in this case, can teams prevent these power-dependence asymmetries from stifling learning and leverage them instead to help their learning? Based on a study of 218 employees from 46 work teams, they suggest that the role of feedback is crucial. “When teams receive feedback on group as opposed to individual performance, power-dependence asymmetry can have a positive effect on team learning behaviour and, through team learning behaviour, on team performance outcomes”. This is because feedback plays a critical role in learning by shaping goal-directed behaviour. It helps project members adopt a collective mind-set and base of identification rather than an individual mind-set. They therefore conclude that “the solution to dealing with power differences in teams where learning is a goal is not to eliminate those differences but, rather, to manage them so that they become an asset rather than an impediment”. By helping project members understand each other’s real interests, goals and needs, stimulating communication around issues and inducing people to change and grow personally from the conflict, good conflict management increases project cohesiveness.

Central to Joint Learning in partnership projects is the notion of trust. It is an important part of social life and has therefore a strong multi-dimensional impact on performance outcomes, including on processes of communication, interaction, cooperation and information sharing. In projects, it affects most notably the willingness of project members to engage in Joint Learning and, more generally, on their commitment to true partnership. As Bailey and Dolan (2011) put it, “partnership is a term which evokes much sensitivity with its implicit connotations of sharing and trust. While aid and charity may refer to a more unequal aid relationship, the term ‘partnership’ suggests equality, respect, reciprocity and ownership”.

Whatever the level at which it is considered, trust is undoubtedly difficult to define²⁴. However, there is agreement about its *relational* nature. As Savolainen and Lopez-Fresno

²³The problem solving approach puts conflict squarely on the table and deals with it. It is a direct confrontation with the issues causing conflict, with disagreements addressed directly. It treats conflict as a “problem” to be solved by examining alternatives and finding solutions. It requires give-and-take attitude and open dialogue.

²⁴Savolainen and Lopez-Fresno cite a definition of trust as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party”. Edmonson and Moingeon (1999) make an important distinction between “trust in competence”, which is the “belief that another has the ability

say, “trust evolves over time based on repeated interactions and information available and shared between parties. Trust is also a person’s assessment of another’s trustworthiness which is manifested in competence, benevolence and integrity... (It) develops in interaction and reciprocal activity between individuals, and within groups and organizations... Cooperation and confidence are concepts that are closely related to trust”. As such, “trust building is a cyclical process and ... with each positive outcome, trust builds on itself incrementally, over time, in a virtuous circle” (Vangen and Huxham, 2003).

Acknowledging power asymmetries, accepting conflict as a natural occurrence in collaborative research that can be beneficial to Joint Learning, leveraging support to provide collective feedback from outside, establishing trust between members through open processes of conflict handling, are all precisely what Jolisaa lacked. The project was caught between two opposing rationales: on the one hand, a rationale of conflict resolution, which required that issues be put on the table and dealt with directly and openly, as both a means of improving its practice and as an exercise of Joint Learning, and, on the other hand, a rationale of conflict avoidance –further explained below- partly from a fear to convey a bad image of the project and/or undermine members’ individual and collective interests.

Exercising Power Through Indirect Influence and Informal Processes

The Jolisaa project team was a short-term team, and as mentioned earlier, the context of a project is not favorable to trust building. According to De Jong and Elfring (2007), “the effects of trust are likely to be more pronounced within ongoing teams than within short-term teams, because ongoing teams tend to be more focused on interpersonal relationships, which increases the impact of trust dynamics on team member interactions... The long-term nature of ongoing teams allows the effects of trust (or a lack thereof) to persist and materialize over an extended period of time”. Thus research shows a negligible or conditional effect of trust on performance in the case of short-term teams and consistent evidence of a positive main effect in the case of ongoing teams. For this reason, it would be risky to make definitive statements on the impact of trust on the Jolisaa general team performance. It is however possible to comment on its impact on Joint Learning (though one could argue that this is also an issue of team performance).

Two modes of communication processes contributed to undermining trust in the case of Jolisaa.

One is due to the ability –exclusive to the Coordinator- to resort to parallel modes of communication that undermine trust –especially trust of project members in him. An outstanding example of this was his power to bypass other members’ status as their organisations’ representatives in the project by communicating directly with their bosses in case of disagreements, as an obvious strategy to exert pressure on them and force them to

to do a task or fulfill a responsibility” and “trust in intentions”, “the belief that another is sincere in his or her espoused commitment to carry out a task or responsibility”.

conform. Another is the resort to informal 'one-on-one' communication with project members to resolve conflicts with them, on issues that concern all partners. The parallel mode of communication was not only with members' bosses, but also with colleagues from the same partner organization²⁵. Thus the legitimacy as representative and the authority to be recognized to the Coordinator is not recognized to the other members. This strategy – which is not open to other project members-materialized most directly the power asymmetries discussed earlier. But it also deprived project members from opportunities to learn jointly by addressing directly the substance of the conflict and developing procedures for its resolution, which is the essence of joint learning.

In the end, the resort to informal and indirect ways of solving conflict only made the situation worse. This is a difficult position to be for a project coordinator in conflict situations in which he is supposed to be a mediator, because instead of being part of the solution, he becomes part of the problem.

A Tale of Deviant Behaviours or Misplaced Expectations?

As I think is clear, this analysis is underpinned by both the author's (and active project member) personal disappointment with the outcomes of the project and a more professional wish to explore what went wrong in its implementation for the sake of personal learning. Disappointment is of course caused by a failure of expectations. But where these expectations misplaced? Against which model should the project be assessed? An obvious answer is that it should be assessed against its *own* model, as defined in the project document.

The tale of the Jolisaa project may be interpreted as that of a gap between theory and practice, with theory being sound and practice constrained by unfavourable circumstances. But as Mosse (2003, 2004) argues in the case of participatory development projects, in the end it is practice that drives development interventions, not theory. But what theory was Jolisaa founded on? To conclude the paper, the following will review some Jolisaa's central concepts, and contrast them with a short literature review on the subject.

The Meaning of Partnership

An important question about the experience of Jolisaa is whether it was right to consider it as a "partnership project" in the first place, and what meaning to give the concept of "partnership". This question seems legitimate because Jolisaa –or at least the project document- makes abundant use of the concept at all levels –rationale, organization,

²⁵ On the face of it, this latter procedure may sound simply as a casual mode of communication between all project members, even a sign of good and healthy informal relations. But in the case of existing and unacknowledged conflicts, it is seen as a deliberate attempt to bypass the member organisations representative's own authority and contributes to fuelling distrust.

management, etc... For example, the rationale of the project is backed up by an emphasis on the need for partnerships in innovation systems development²⁶.

There is now a large body of literature that shows that partnership is a notoriously slippery concept. In their review of experiences in partnerships in development research, Horton, Prain and Thiele (2009) note that the “partnership” label has often been conveniently applied to old, and already existing, forms of interaction, to take advantage of the current fashion for the concept, especially among donors. This, they say, “has confused discussions of partnership and led to a degree of cynicism concerning ‘pseudo partnerships’, ‘transactional partnerships’, and ‘partnerships of convenience’” (p.12). This confusion leads another author to point out that “the ubiquity with which ‘partnership’ is invoked means that virtually any relationship between ... institutions, regardless of its scope, has come to be described thus” (Downes, 2013).

Similarly, Bradley (2007) concludes her extensive literature review on the subject of North-South Research Partnerships by stating that “much of the literature on North-South research cooperation is highly critical, underlining the persistent political, economic and cultural obstacles to creating mutually beneficial partnerships, and the tensions inherent in this goal” (p.34). Among the critiques, an outstanding one is power asymmetries in access to funding, information, project administration, budget management, etc... She notes the “continued impact of neo-colonialism and globalization on collaboration”.

Bailey and Dolan (2011), reviewing experience of international partnerships in education, conclude that “partnerships exist on an uneven playing field, with the partner controlling finances often determining the terms of the partnership (and that) “good will” is not enough to eradicate structural power asymmetries within North-South research partnerships”. Among many of their explicit and implicit objectives, North-South partnerships, despite the rhetoric attached to this term, are also meant to “nurture regional networks of expertise, and facilitate Southern organizations to become recognized actors in policy dialogue in international cooperation” by mobilizing their capacities (Hauck and Land, 2000). Ideally, collaboration in a partnership can be “an important form of institutional entrepreneurship resulting in changes in the institutions, networks and capacities that constitute organizational fields” (Lawrence, Hardy and Phillips, 1999).

Beyond the vagaries of a single project, eventually a major question is whether the project contributed to the achievement of more strategic long term objectives of the partnership, whether building Southern capacities, institutional development, learning, etc...

In the case of Jolisaa, these potential changes remain to be explored in a more systematic manner than this paper can do. But a few comments are made on the impact of the project on its member organizations and its contribution to capacity building.

²⁶ A simple word count of the project document yields more than 30 occurrences of « partnership » and 12 of “joint learning”.

An important aspect of research partnerships is that they are assumed to result in positive outcomes for their members that go beyond immediate financial gains and the ability to fund their activities. The “collaborative advantage” of partnerships is also “derived from both the knowledge set that a firm possesses at single point in time and the dynamic capability to create, integrate and use such knowledge” (Revilla, Acosta and Sarkis, 2005). Did the individual partners learn and develop institutionally as a result of the Jolisaa project? This raises the fundamental question of the real embeddedness of partnership in its member organizations.

Another important insight in the potential role of inter-organizational collaboration in institutional change is provided by Lawrence et al. (2002). They identify “embeddedness” and “involvement” as two key factors in collaboration if the latter is to bring about this change. *Embeddedness* is an ‘external’ factor referring to the degree to which collaboration initiated by the partnership is entwined with inter-organizational relationships. The denser these relationships –interactions with third parties, representation arrangements, wide and multi-dimensional information flows- the more embedded the partnership. *Involvement* is an ‘internal’ factor referring to the dynamics of collaboration between partners –depth of interactions, partnership arrangements, bilateral information flows-, the deeper and more intense these, the greater the involvement. It is when collaboration demonstrates great embeddedness and involvement that they have the greatest impact on the collaborating organizations, including in knowledge creation and political influence. As a result, “proto-institutions” are likely to emerge as “important first steps in the process of institution creation, thus potentially forming the basis for broader, field-level change”. These proto-institutions are “new practices, rules and technologies that transcend a particular collaborative relationship and may become a new institution if they diffuse sufficiently”, thus forming the basis for broader, longer-term, field-level change (ibid).

Writing more specifically from the perspective of partnerships, Kingsley and Waschak (2005) reach similar conclusions. Although organizations have also rational reasons to enter into partnerships – to gain resources, to increase control or coordination, to gain knowledge or expertise- , they found that “measures of embeddedness like trust, a potential partner’s reputation, open communication and the presence of a passionate individual were indeed important to the formation of a partnership” .

Although a detailed analysis of embeddedness is not possible here, these research findings throw a light on Jolisaa’s –and many more development projects- shortcomings. To what extent did the experience of the partnership permeate the member organizations’ power structure and activities and influence their own behaviour?

At a very general level, the answer is undoubtedly that it did. Entering into formal collaboration frameworks –however little they qualify as true partnerships- is already an important change of behaviour. This is however forced by circumstances, a conditionality set by the donors; and this conditionality concerns the formation of a partnership to access funding, not specifically to use the partnership to promote internal learning and change in the member organizations. The experience of Jolisaa was all about meeting obligations, ticking off contractual activities and producing expected deliverables, ie, the usual mode of

operation of service providers and consultants. The rationale for the partners, as well as for the partnership as a whole, was to complete the project activities, with little attention being paid to formalization of learning or its transfer to their employing organization²⁷.

Teams Within Teams

There is certainly a strong need for teamwork in inter-institutional projects –to some extent the notions of “partners” and “team” are almost synonymous. Teams are needed for several purposes: representation of each member’s interests and mobilization of its resources for the benefit of the project, coordination between members’ respective contributions, intellectual exchanges and guidance, planning, etc.. The project objectives are obviously better served by a close-knit and complementary project team²⁸. Such team exists and is effective only if it develops gradually to create trust, psychological safety, cohesion and interdependence for its members (Raesa, Kyndta and Dochya(2015). These “emergent states” can be considered as “both inputs and outcomes of the reality they are part of... they play a crucial role in understanding team dynamics and changes in teamwork over time” (ibid). It is through collective learning activities (“iterations”) that teams develop. “These learning activities occur in the form of adaptive, generative or transformational learning efforts from the team members that alter the way they approach collaboration and task work” (ibid). Concomitantly, one can assume that these learning activities help the team reach a shared cognition about the issues at stake. The essence of collaborative research is the process of building and maintaining such “shared mental models” (vd Bossche et al. 2011) and developing a transactive memory system which provides team members with more and better knowledge than their own and informs them on the store of knowledge and expertise they can access through the team communicative processes to improve their performance (Nandkeolyar, 2008; Argote and Ren, 2012; Huang, Liu and Zhong, 2013).

In Jolisaa, the concept of “project team” was so ambiguous as to make it impossible to speak of a “team”, except in a very colloquial sense. Project implementation was organised around multiple teams in a complex and variable geometry of competences and roles: the international team meant to provide project members with feedback, the project steering committee meant to guide the project and make decisions, the national teams meant to coordinate with local partners and plan field activities, and the case assessment teams meant to carry out these field activities and produce reports.. This nested hierarchy of teams, with members coming from different organisations and spread over different

²⁷ To my knowledge, no member organisation has a formal institutional mechanism to capitalize on experiences, although some may have created opportunities to do so on specific occasions.

²⁸ This is implicitly recognized in the Jolisaa project document which emphasizes that “the (Jolisaa) consortium brings together individuals with a unique set of skills and attitudes which will enrich the project: strong conceptual thinking, pragmatism, facilitation, team spirit, capacity to think and act in synergy, networking, field orientation, attention to and respect for local people and their cultures and contexts, pedagogy and commitment to joint learning and mutual capacity-strengthening ».

national and international locations could not possibly made to work creatively, or indeed to learn jointly²⁹. As Babnicka et al (2014) point out, socialization, face-to-face relationships and cooperative interactions are important for the purpose of knowledge creation, sharing and utilization. “Bringing people together to work on the same task or for the same goal in a collaborative environment, so that ideas, experiences and reflections can be shared and enhanced is an imperative of knowledge management”.

Capacity Building in Partnership Projects

The notions of partnership and capacity building are closely linked in development. As Hauck and Land (2000) note in their review of North-South partnerships, “those who champion the partnership concept see it as reflecting a deliberate policy choice which seeks to establish new roles and relationships between North and South that challenge structural inequalities and the inculcated mind-set of giver and taker in aid relationships. Partnership, in this sense, becomes a development objective and is closely linked to notions of capacity development, ownership and participation, which see the current distribution of roles and relationships between North and South as undermining sustainable development”. In this sense, capacity development becomes the collective role of the partnership and not solely that of a project “Work Package”, the role of the latter being, at best, to plan and coordinate the partners’ efforts. This raises immediately the question of the impact of power asymmetry on this shared responsibility. This is also noted by Hauck and Land, at the partnership level “such power asymmetry can also challenge ostensible capacity development objectives and strategies by undermining the managerial autonomy and performance of the Southern partner”. At the project Work Package level, the leadership responsibility, when not matched by enough power to influence project strategy, is considerably reduced. In the case of Jolisaa, the author (and leader of the capacity building work package) as well as the three national project leaders, were faced with that situation. Budget shortfalls meant that they had very little room for manoeuvre to cover the cost of joint learning events³⁰.

This said, building the capacities of a partnership project faces special challenges, not least what was meant exactly by ‘capacity building’. The concept of capacity can be understood as a generic attribute or orientation, ie, the ability to realize one’s own objectives, whatever these are. It can also be understood as capacity in relation to a specific object or objective of change (Sastre Merino and de los Ríos Carmenado, 2012). In the case of Jolisaa, these two meanings were implied, the first in the emphasis in working with existing multi-stakeholder ‘platforms’³¹ and strengthening them during the project, the second in the emphasis on

²⁹Harris and Lyon (2014) and Dillenbourg (1999), writing on collaborative learning, emphasize the issue of team size and face-to-face interactions. Teams need to be big enough to bring diversity of perspectives but small enough to build relationships.

³⁰ As an indication of the difficulties, the assessment of 13 innovation cases was conducted by different local teams of 5-10 persons each, spread over 3 countries, and different locations in each country, each operating at a different time (convenient for all team members).

³¹The Project document states that creating new platforms is beyond its scope, and that it should work with existing ones, those associated with or already collaborating with the project partners. At least two Northern partners –including the author’s organisation- had such association.

training local partners to enable them to conduct case study assessment, ie, basically participate in a research project.

As Sutherland (2011) points out in his review of experiences of capacity assessment of Multi Stakeholder Platforms, the areas in which capacities need strengthening are fairly straightforward. If platforms are meant to promote innovation, “developing the capacity of a diverse group of stakeholders to use a shared language/set of concepts (is) empowering for the stakeholders and reduces the risk of them adopting a “business as usual” stance”. The emphasis of capacity strengthening should therefore be on strengthening “soft skills” and the capacity of various actors and organizations to work in partnership.

In the case of Jolisaa, the main challenge was to break two vicious circles evidenced by the project objectives noted earlier: first, *building the capacity of a partnership requires that this partnership is already in existence, yet bringing the partnership into existence requires some capacity building*; and second, *how to build the capacity of a partnership which is itself meant to be a medium of capacity building for its members and others*.

The Jolisaa partnership building process was, by necessity, a continuous process, with ups and downs, local members coming in and going out, hesitating and generally participating very little. This makes capacity building efforts all the more difficult, especially if they are conducted in the framework of a short project. It is a case of trying “to hit a moving target”. More specifically, difficulties reside in partners’ availability and commitment to the project, capacity assessment, and project resources, most notably time.

One of the most important problems is that capacity building must be intertwined with the project’s normal activities. Capacity building events must help members implement their project functions which in turn are vectors of capacity building. In Jolisaa the level of commitment of members did not allow this intertwining. Like in most development projects, “capacity building” was organized into “workshops” meant to provide participants with knowledge, concepts, tools, to be used in activities in-between workshops. For capacity building activities to have an impact on project performance, workshop participants must be involved in project implementation activities, when in Jolisaa only a few of them, for budgetary reasons, has the opportunity to do so.

A further issue is that capacity assessments often do not take into account the impacts of other capacity building initiatives. It is an important issue in a development context dominated by a plethora of “workshops” which very often have “capacity building” objectives. The author’s experience is that project members are often also members of other organizations and/or projects and spend a sometimes considerable time attending such workshops³². This serves to highlight a simple fact: if capacity building events are of a central importance to their organizers, they are but one of many such events for their participants,

³² Given the now well established tradition of serving per diems to participants, attending workshops is also often a far from negligible source of income.

some of whom maybe members of several other structures, with converging, contradictory or opposing activities and incentives³³.

In the case of Jolisaa, this process of disconnection between workshops and other project activities was predictable right from the initial workshops when project leaders could not commit to funding participants' involvement in fieldwork. It was a strange and somewhat frustrating experience to facilitate workshops, ostensibly aimed at 'planning' future activities, but with no firm commitment from participants to engage into these activities. Capacity building in a partnership project, however relevant and useful, can therefore become disconnected from its initial objectives, as simply another one of the many such activities members attend during the year.

A Final Tale of Two Projects: What and Whose Research is it Anyway?

One of the main conclusions of this paper is that implications of a research project in partnership come in the way and limit the conditions of Joint Learning. A first conflict is that between a logic of control, inherent to project management, and a logic of learning, concomitant with any research process. A second conflict is between a logic of authority embedded in the asymmetry of power between project coordination and other project members, and a logic of research where there can be no argument of authority but only validity of argumentation. In terms of functioning of the project, this double edged conflict translates into a conflict between a logic of conflict resolution –as a necessary part of the Joint Learning process- and a logic of conflict avoidance –as part of short project management strategy.

These conclusions are similar to those of studies on collaborative research. For example, from a review of 76 cases of transdisciplinary research, Harris and Lyon (2014) point out the tensions arising within the transdisciplinary process, due to the « inherent paradox in which transdisciplinary research seeks diversity of participants and perspectives, but requires their alignment towards common goals and research outcomes ». They emphasize the need to recognize diversity of values, methods and reward systems among participants and, on the other hand, to select teams while optimising team size and diversity to encourage knowledge creation without overwhelming cognitive distance. Tackling such issues requires that those managing funds build their own capacity to, especially, develop their expertise in reviewing project proposals and reports, because «defining quality and success is contingent on values, expectations, culture, language and reward structures of all participants, funders and end users (and) balancing the views of different stakeholders is a particular challenge» (ibid).

The Jolisaa project, like many other projects seeking resources in donors' competitive funding systems, was caught into the conflict between big conceptual ambitions, meant to

³³An example is presented by Drost and van Wijk (2011). Commenting on the example of a value chain Multi Stakeholder Platform, they write that members "are very active and committed at the meetings and in specific committees, however not or less committed as soon as the meeting ends. Agreed assignments are not being prepared for the next meetings and implementation is absent".

make the project attractive to the donor, and little resources to achieve them, forced by the funding ceilings decided by the donor. This question of disconnection between high flying concepts and down-to-earth conditions of action highlights the importance of the choice of the project's concept during the preparation and initiation phases, ie, the "front-end" definition of the project (Samset and Volden, 2015; Williams and Samset, 2010; Edkins et al, 2012)³⁴.

In the absence of a formal clarification of what Jolisaa was all about (in itself a serious Joint Learning failure), two visions of the project co-existed all along and were never resolved, whether in terms of research type, learning process or coordination between project members.

In terms of research, one vision of the Jolisaa project was that of a straight, business-as-usual research project with, classically, a strong emphasis on data gathering and analysis with a strong motivation to publish for University and research partners. In this vision, there was never any intention to build long term local capacity or any forward looking for project members and their local partners. Jolisaa was simply a question of assessing innovations to draw lessons and make recommendations. This implicit vision is represented in the formal conceptual framework –produced by the Northern University partner-, followed by the classical procedure of research question formulation (a rather complex, multi-level, set of questions) and hypotheses³⁵. Indirectly, this vision undermined the capacity building component of the project. It implied capacity building as what could be called metaphorically a "medical treatment" fashion: it was simply a question of making "interventions" in the form of short training sessions to "cure" the patients by injecting the concepts and tools necessary to conduct the assessments. "Capacity building" here is equated with enabling people to use tools to gather information. This instrumental vision highlights a contradiction in project design: why should the project have an international organization in charge of this type of capacity building when two of the country partners are universities –the third being a national research organization- with considerable experience and perfectly able to ensure the necessary training.

A second vision was that of an action research project which combines the achievement of case assessment and lesson sharing with local empowerment, to create a dynamics for the

³⁴Focussing exclusively on the narrow life-cycle of the project is the usual role of project management, and deals with the processes required to complete a project within the defined scope, quality, time, and cost. In the case of Jolisaa, paying attention to the front-end of the project prior to that would have allowed for a decision on project *governance* as opposed to project *management*, defining clearly and taking into account concepts such as Joint Learning, differences between project coordination and project management, extra costs needed for effective participation of external project partners, arbitration procedures, etc...

³⁵Yet the methodology developed later for the assessment of the innovation cases was of a qualitative type, unlikely to rigorously test these hypotheses.

future. This vision puts emphasis on working with local innovation platforms (this is referred to several times in the project document), and using the project resources and expertise to build their capacity. This requires much more than short training sessions (Jolisaa workshop participants have nearly all attended countless numbers of such training in the past). It required opportunities for them to meet, to exchange and reflect together as often as possible. This vision was supported by the project document which emphasizes that “the process of developing the case studies forms the heart of a capacity-development trajectory for local and national stakeholders... The participatory assessment methodology with an inbuilt capacity-strengthening process (i.e. training of facilitators, reflection sessions with stakeholders, etc...) will have a strong component of learning and mutual knowledge generation at national and sub-national level”.

Although these two different visions were occasionally expressed and discussed, there was never a clear-cut statement made on what vision the project aimed for, as part of a joint learning effort. Instead, forced by time and budget constraints, project members gradually backslid the project ambitions, and implicitly tuned methodology and activities to a standard research project format, without the conflict between the two visions being acknowledged. In the end, the project fell into –rather than explicitly decided to opt for³⁶ - a model that did not live up to the standards of either of the two visions.

In terms of learning process, the project collapsed under the weight of its own ambitions, to turn into a classic top-down project, with relatively little involvement of local professionals in decision making. The conclusions highlight the fact that most projects adopt a rational model, what Bunderson and Reagans (2010) describe as “a model that emphasizes goal-directed and cooperative interactions between and among actors who may differ in knowledge and expertise but are undifferentiated with respect to power and status”. Yet, as they found out in their review of power, status and learning, even if “groups and organizations do manage to learn in spite of their inevitable power and status differences », these differences can « complicate three key processes that play central roles in rational system models of collective learning: anchoring on shared goals, risk-taking and experimentation, and knowledge sharing », and thus present an obstacle to collective learning. At the higher end of the power and status spectrum, individuals can better regulate their behaviour towards the achievement of the common goals since they have the ability to update information relevant to goal achievement, fewer constraints and greater freedom of action³⁷. At the lower end, individuals are distracted by other considerations, including the actions of the most powerful individuals, and may not feel safe engaging in key behaviours that facilitate learning.

In terms of overall coordination between project members, the complex architecture of the project required high costs of coordination between levels; with overall responsibility lying

³⁶Project changes of strategy and methodology are of course common occurrences and are legitimate when a project faces unforeseen difficulties. The point made here is that, in the case of Jolisaa, at the root of joint learning there is the need of *acknowledgement and explicitation* of issues as a condition for joint learners to express concerns, pinpoint causes of conflict, draw implications, and solve problems together. The strategy to evade or minimize the open expression of conflict through indirect means not only bypasses the legitimate authority of project members but also considerably reduces the scope of joint learning.

³⁷ One of the most important constraints, as pointed out earlier, is time. With the exception of the Coordinator, very few project team members had enough time budgeted in the project.

with only one person –the coordinator as representative of the lead organization- the risk was high that the overall coordination style be influenced by time pressure and bypasses the responsibilities of other project members, including towards their own organization. This curtailed their ability to meet their own obligations. The Janus-headed configuration of the coordination function –both overall project management and leadership of the main activities structuring the project- left effectively little room for other project members to exert their own leadership over the design and funding decision of their assigned activities. Such configuration is all the more inadequate since research projects, such as Jolisaa, are primarily “soft” projects³⁸ that require “softer” coordination procedures that allow all project members to attain also their own goals and interests.

A final question one might ask is whether, despite (perhaps thanks to) the failures and adaptations described in this paper, the project was successful. But what is success? This is undoubtedly a difficult question if only because success is time-dependent, and may need time to materialize. In any case, people and organisations are likely to assess success differently, depending on their values, preferences, degree to which it met their own criteria or interests. It is very common to consider a project successful when it has met its time, performance and budget goals, with all the features and functions as originally specified, ie, a business-like approach (Shenhar et al, 2001; Samset and Volden, 2016; Nelson, 2005). In this sense, one could consider that the Jolisaa project was indeed successful³⁹. But, and this is a crucial and unfortunately quite common distinction in the field of rural development, this is *tactical* success⁴⁰ for project members, not *strategic* success for the project as a whole. “Ironically ... when project managers and project teams are engaged in day-to-day project execution, they are typically not focusing on the business aspects. Their attention, rather, is operational—and their mind-set is on “getting the job done” (Shenhar et al, 2001). In the case of Jolisaa, this operational mind-set meant giving priority to ticking off planned activities in strict line with the project contract specifications rather than reflecting on processes and creating space and resources for joint learning. As a result, members were able to complete their mission with the given resources and produce the tangible output expected from them by the donor, when strategic success for the project would have been to create the capacities –networks, skills, participation procedures - to take the work of the project

³⁸Projects whose “goals and objectives are ambitiously defined, goal tangibility is low at the project start, and many alternative solutions are explored and, if necessary, discarded” (Vom Brocke and Lippe, 2015).

³⁹ The project did not meet its time goal, and had a one year extension, but still managed to work within its original budget, which considering the resource constraints described here, is quite an achievement. Shenhar et al. suggest that, given the difficulty of even defining project ‘success’, it may be useful to make a distinction between ‘project success’ and ‘product success’. But here again it is too early to assess the success of Jolisaa’s products (case studies, policy briefs, training materials, publications, etc...). At the time of writing, there seems to be a new project being developed as a follow-up to Jolisaa, with new objectives and new partners. But this again can be interpreted –*a posteriori*- as a ‘tactical’ success for the lead organisations participating in both, using the first project as a stepping stone, to serve their own objectives.

⁴⁰Cooke-Davis (2012) labels this tactical success ‘project management success’, measured against the widespread and traditional measures of performance against cost, time and quality, as contrasted with ‘project success’, measured against the overall objectives of the project.

forward and produce intangible benefits for local partners, such as their ability to work collectively to promote local innovation, ie, the central concept of the project.

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