



"Alone we can do
so little; together
we can do so
much."
- Helen Keller

Cross Network Effective Collaboration

An Exploration into collaboration methods inspired by
bio-mimicry

[You can watch the recording of the session here.](#)

[You can download the design for the session here.](#)

In the recording you will find some more context to the case study please watch that first. For this case study we focus on the fungi life-cycle and the different tools that enable this process in the cross network collaboration process.

1. Conditions for existence

Before we launch into growth we need to establish the necessary ingredients for existence. Fungi need water, an energy source, mild temperature. These are commonalities shared among many forms of life interconnected with other elements and the whole.

So before we contemplate cross network collaboration, what are the basic building blocks for sustaining life in the network as a part of the whole.

- People
- Energy / Capacity
- Good relations

In the Emergent Festival the festival was only made possible through a few dedicated people who had energy and capacity leaning into their good relationships to firstly make a proposal an external funder would then subsequently accept.

The tools here used were:

- maintain a source – person with a vision to stay aligned
- ensure maintained capacity – identifying needs of people involved vis a vis needs to carry the task through
- maintain a good working relationship with the external funder
- focused meetings to take the process from vision to proposal to acceptance
- bring in learning from previous experience / feedback



2. Conditions for growth

As fungi consume organic matter through enzyme secretions they turn dead organic matter into other substances such as glucose which they can then consume. Whilst we normally focus on the synergies between fungi and trees there is also a strong synergy between fungi and animals.

“Cows and other animals that eat grass depend on gut fungi and other microorganisms to help break down lignin, cellulose, and other materials in wood's cell walls. While fungi only make up 8 percent of the gut microbes, they break down 50 percent of the biomass.”

In the emergent festival the growth happened as the fruiting body of the fungi was becoming apparent, rules of engagement became clear and thus enabling people to feel safe in engaging into the collaboration by putting their own contributions forwards for the community to consider.

In addition to focusing on clearly indicating what engagement is invited the edge was also used to extend that engagement into other fertile areas of the International Permaculture CoLab. This provided an extended view of the colab, a sense of orientation and shone a light on areas which were previously unknown to new people joining into the ecosystem as individuals and as representatives of their networks, projects and communities.

The tools used were:

- provide clear anchoring for all parties to share a general sense of direction and boundaries
- lay out policies and terms explained to reduce misunderstandings
- provide scaffolding and support on an ongoing basis for people to check in about how things are going on the way to delivery / collaboration
- stay present with the context that no all collaborators are familiar with the ecosystem as others entering the system and use that as a benefit to evolve with feedback
- be mindful of the amount of time needed for those fungal hypha to get strong, building connections with trust – as the speed of trust



Harvest from the Exploration

Existence & Growth Require:

Energy

Wanting to connect

New Spaces as Edge

Humility

Safe enough to ask for help

Shared vision

Asset mapping

Document and apply learnings

Honoring the differences that work in different parts of the physical / energetic stages of work

Making time to be a part of the whole

Capacity to manage the soft parts of collaboration

Capacity to manage the operational parts of collaboration

Time, resources and money

Equity centered approaches

Good communication

Outreach

Clear control lines

Balance managing and inspiring

Communicating the shared vision, training with source

Feeling and being in place

Fostering a place of belonging

Get to know and address the needs of collaborators

Consciously design the fruiting body of the collaboration



Additional Resources

Working with Source

<https://workwithsource.com/>

Turning dead organic matter to nutrients

<https://www.energy.gov/science/articles/behind-scenes-how-fungi-make-nutrients-available-world>
Article

Versatility of Fungi

<https://youtu.be/BlcKBKJ8uro>

03.30min

Bio mimicry in Business

<https://www.greenbiz.com/article/10-amazing-uses-biomimicry-business>

Article

Fungi and Sustainable Neighborhoods

<https://www.fastcompany.com/1636523/biomimicry-challenge-toa-uses-fungi-reimagine-sustainable-neighborhoods>

Article

Cross Team Collaboration Tips

<https://www.lifesize.com/blog/cross-team-collaboration/>

Article

Gratitude to all exploration participants for making this document rich <3

