Collaboration

The art of "muddling through", Charles E. Lindblom 1959

The "root" method of decision-making with the "branch" approach.

The root method required comprehensive evaluation of options in the light of defined objectives. Root, because you start all the way from the roots to build something completely new.

The branch method involved building out, step-by-step and by small degrees, from the current situation. Branch, because you aren't going all the way back to the roots. You work from the existing system and just do some work with the branches.

Collaboration
in a complex environment

External preconditions
(hard to change)
• relevant actors and interests
• official goals, motives and expectations
• conflicts and art of complexity (issue, procedure, etc)
• support from mother organisations (incl. normative)
• real decision space and decision power
• resources at start and during change
• ongoing, parallell processes (politics)
• media and public debate
• access to information (R&D)
• collaborative potential?

History
• existing relations
• earlier experiences
• "historical debts"
• initiator
• supporting or hindering structures

Leadership and management
• external or internal
• competence
• role and responsibility
• understanding of purpose and objectives
• real engagement

Processes and activities
• communication and learning
• pedagogic and particiation (balancing safety vs. creativity and individual vs. group)
• reflection and action
• conflict management
• capacity building
• confirmation and feed-back

Perspectives
• wanting (curiosity, interest, trust, confidence, etc.)
• ability (living a life, etc.)
• knowing (understanding, insights, seeing potentials, etc.)

Internal preconditions (created)
• participants (incl representatives)
• arenas and fora for learning/dialogue ("voice")
• process design (phases) and single activities
• relevant information channels
• influence
• access to "tool box"
• access to information
• time allocation
• resources (competence, money, structures)
• organisation (incl. responsibilities)

End users and actors
• who?
• where?
• when?
• how?
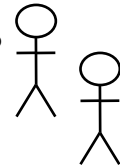
Results and effects
• implementation
• real, measurable improvements
• changes in the policy environment
• goal fulfillment
• sustainable development
• relational changes
• new structures (arenas, routines, neworks, etc. relational changes

Assessing collaborative potential

External preconditions
(hard to change)
• relevant actors and interests
• official goals, motives and expectations
• conflicts and art of complexity
(issue, procedure, etc)
• support from mother organisations
(including normative)
• real decision space and decision power

• resources at start and during change
• on going, parallel processes (politics)
• media and public debate
• access to information (R&D)

History
• existing relations
• earlier experiences
• "historical debts"
• initiator
• supporting or hindering
structures
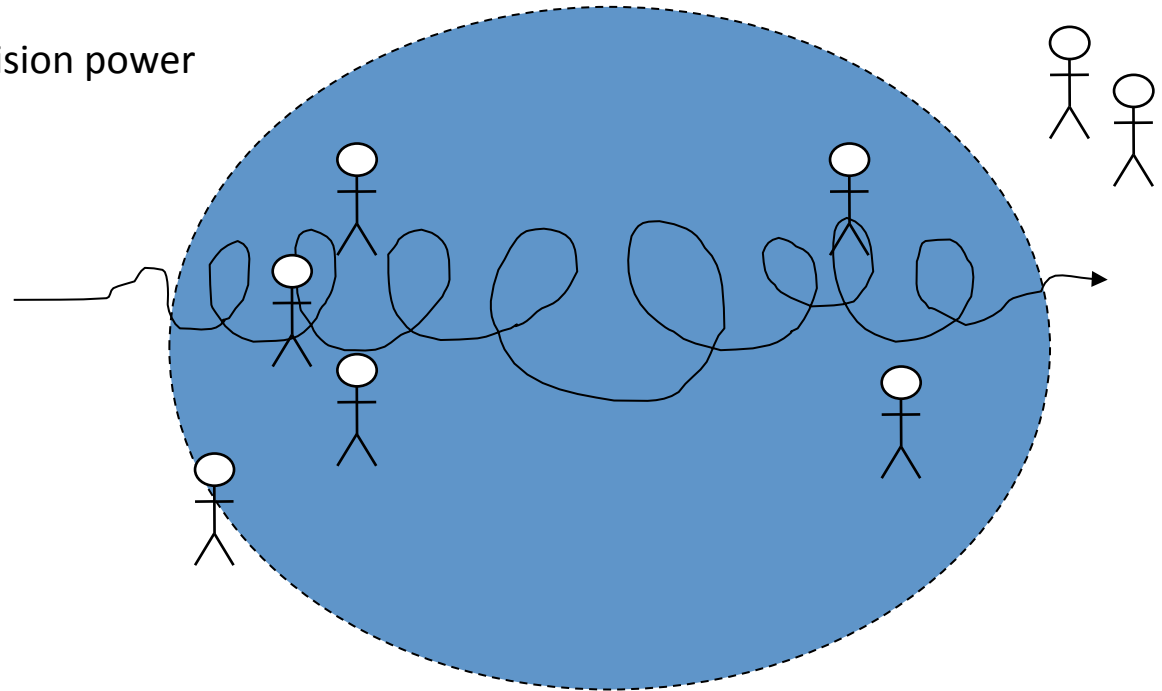
Assessing collaborative potential

Daniels & Walker, 1998

ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE POTENTIAL: INITIAL SCREENING WORKSHEET

Part one
Give three <u>concrete</u> conflict management or decision making situations which the members of the group perceive as characterised by complexity and controversies, and where a project or process oriented approach would be a successful way forward.
A.
B.
C.

Rank these three situations in order of perceived need for collaboration, with 1 being the situation with the greatest need.
1.
2.
3.

Part two
Rate each situation (theoretically) on a 1 to 5 scale according to the following screening criteria.

1. Number and nature of participants

1	2	3	4	5		A	B	C
Few parties, clearly identified			Many parties, or parties poorly identified			_____/	_____/	_____

2. History of the situation

1	2	3	4	5		A	B	C
Newly emerging, little history			Long history, or volatile history			_____/	_____/	_____

3. Level of trust and respect between actors

1	2	3	4	5		A	B	C
Reasonable trust and respect			Little or no trust, questionable respect			_____/	_____/	_____

4. The current situation is:

1	2	3	4	5		A	B	C
Driven by specific identifiable interests			Driven by deeply held values and/or cultural differences			_____/	_____/	_____

5. In this situation, parties have:

1	2	3	4	5		A	B	C
Few other viable options for resolution			Many other viable options for resolution			_____/	_____/	_____

Subtotal (carry values to the next page)   _____/ _____/ _____

Assessing collaborative potential

Daniels & Walker, 1998

Subtotal (enter values from the previous page)   _____/_____/_____

6. The issues in this situation are:

  1   2   3   4   5   A   B   C

Clear and not   Highly controversial

controversial   and/or unclear   _____/_____/_____

7. This situation has:

  1   2   3   4   5   A   B   C

Little scientific   Considerable

uncertainty   scientific uncertainty _____/_____/_____

8. Relevant information in this situation:

  1   2   3   4   5   A   B   C

Is publicly accessible in Is not publicly accessible

an understandable form is not understandable _____/_____/_____

9. In this situation:

  1   2   3   4   5   A   B   C

Key decision makers   Key decision makers are

are involved and   not involved and are

committed to   not committed to   _____/_____/_____

collaboration   collaboration

10. Resources in this situation:

  1   2   3   4   5   A   B   C

Are readily available   Are difficult to find to

to support collaboration support collaboration _____/_____/_____

                  TOTAL   _____/_____/_____

Total the rating points for each conflict/decision situation. A lower score indicates a more manageable situation and greater collaborative potential.

Compare your ratings with your rankings from page 1. How does each situation's ranking and rating match up?

In those situations that need collaboration but have low collaborative potential, what could be done to increase the prospect for collaboration?

Further reflections:

What kind of situations will you work with at home, where the collaborative potential is important to assess? Note that it could be both external processes and/or internally in the organisation you yourself would be working in? Which impact might your assessment have on choosing a project management or process management approach?

Why <u>not</u> work collaboratively?

- Time pressure – a need to take action now!

- Asymmetries in power and access to resources among actors in collaborative work (from groups to society)
- Political jargon without real content or learning
- Reflecting a trend toward decentralisation of responsibility in society

- Pseudo democracy – existing relations and structures does not change – it feels good, but is it really as good?
- The risk that shared responsibility becomes no ones responsibility?

Thus, a critical perspective is always needed