

## INTRODUCING THE THEORY OF COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE

Siv Vangen and Chris Huxham

Reduced to a Tweet:

*Working together in an emerging complex field is hard. Everyone shares the same aims - the Collaborative Advantage. But overall success comes from teaming up diverse people and resources. The differences mean disagreement and Collaborative Inertia.*

Key Excerpts:

*"... The theory of collaborative advantage has two organising principles. First it is structured around a tension between Collaborative Advantage - the synergy that can be created through joint working - and Collaborative Inertia - the tendency for collaborative activities to be frustratingly slow to produce output or uncomfortably conflict-ridden. It is also structured around issues that tend to energise those who manage collaborations - their anxieties and rewards. ...*

*"... The theory [describes] the complexity that underlies collaborative situations and the resulting challenges that are intrinsic to them. And it [points to] the issues that must be managed but without providing precise recipes for managerial action ...*

*"The gist of the argument is that developing clear, common or agreed aims is essential if partners are to make any joint progress. Yet the notion of congruent aims in collaborative situations is fundamentally paradoxical. The paradox arises because the possibility for achieving advantage usually rests on drawing synergy from heterogeneous partners with different resources, experiences and expertise. These differences, however, stem partly from partners having different purposes and visions, which lead them to seek dissimilar involvements and benefits from collaborating. This paradox makes seeking agreement on aims problematic in practice."*

*In Osborne, S (ed) (2010) The new public governance? Emerging perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance. Chap. 10: pp 163-184 Routledge*  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47514680\\_Introducing\\_the\\_theory\\_of\\_collaborative\\_advantage](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47514680_Introducing_the_theory_of_collaborative_advantage)