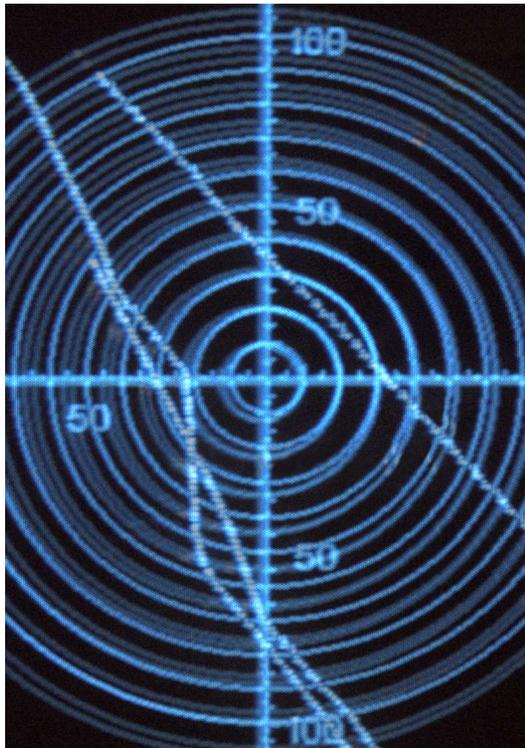


Below the Radar: Family Trees



*Understanding the transfer of
skills, knowledge and
resources in below the radar
organisations: some
methodological challenges*

Reference Group meeting
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and
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Why ‘Family Trees’? Context

- How are resources, skills and knowledge gained and transferred in and between below the radar groups?
 - Research emphasis has been on formal/organisational learning rather than ‘informal transfer’
 - Emphasis on structure and ‘professionalism’ and ‘health check’, tool-kit and quality standards models of resource transfer
 - Policy relevance to capacity building and ‘big society’
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Family Trees: Aims

- To understand how skills, resources and knowledge are gain by activists and below the radar groups (formal/informal)
 - To identify how skills and knowledge are transferred between below the radar groups as activists ‘move on’
 - To explore current models of capacity building in ‘btr’ contexts
 - To examine deficit models of below the radar groups and activities
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Family Trees: The Plan

- Literature review on social network theory
 - Design, develop or adapt appropriate tools for network mapping ‘below the radar’
 - Pilot tools: super diverse community, rural, young people
 - ‘Track’ key individuals/groups in terms of gaining, sharing and transferring skills, knowledge and resources
-

Family Trees and Social Network Theory

Initial literature review identified a number of related models for social network analysis including:

- Network Theory
- Life History Calendar
- Voluntary Associations Life Cycle
- Social Capital Theory
- Organisation Theory
- Resource Mobilisation Theory
- Life Course Analysis
- Participatory Mapping

Social Network Analysis

Broadly speaking, social network models are designed using one of two methods;

1) Whole-network Design (Wesserman and Faust, 1994) – examines sets of interrelated objects or actors that are regarded for analytical purposes as bound in a social collective

2) Egocentric Design (Marsden, 1987) - focuses on one object or actor (“ego”) and its relationships (with “alters”) within a locality

Visually, both methods tend to use analysis software to represent findings using “sociograms” or maps that display relationships using *nodes* and *linkages*, which increase in number as networks become more complex

Existing Models: Some Issues

Existing models of social network analysis most commonly present:

- A complete picture of a network from either single or multiple perspectives at one point in time

Or:

- A temporal perspective of a number of single cases within a network

But:

- Do not capture the transient / informal nature of below the radar networks
- Do not adequately represent network changes over time
- Lack the opportunity to explore complex qualitative information

Family Trees: Some Challenges

- Tracking the development of skills, resources and knowledge over time
 - Understanding how knowledge is gained in informal settings – and how it is (or is it?) transferred
 - Linking social network theory with adult learning and organisational development models
 - Manageable sample – and selecting appropriate case studies
-

Family Trees: Our Approach

On the basis that in-depth case studies are a valuable means of gaining insight into BTR activity, our proposed model...

- uses a longitudinal “egocentric” design
- can either be applied retrospectively or in real time
- provides a visualisation of three dimensions of resource relationship:
 - Level of importance
 - Direction of influence
 - Strength of relationship
- provides snapshots of temporal changes in network resources within and between organisations

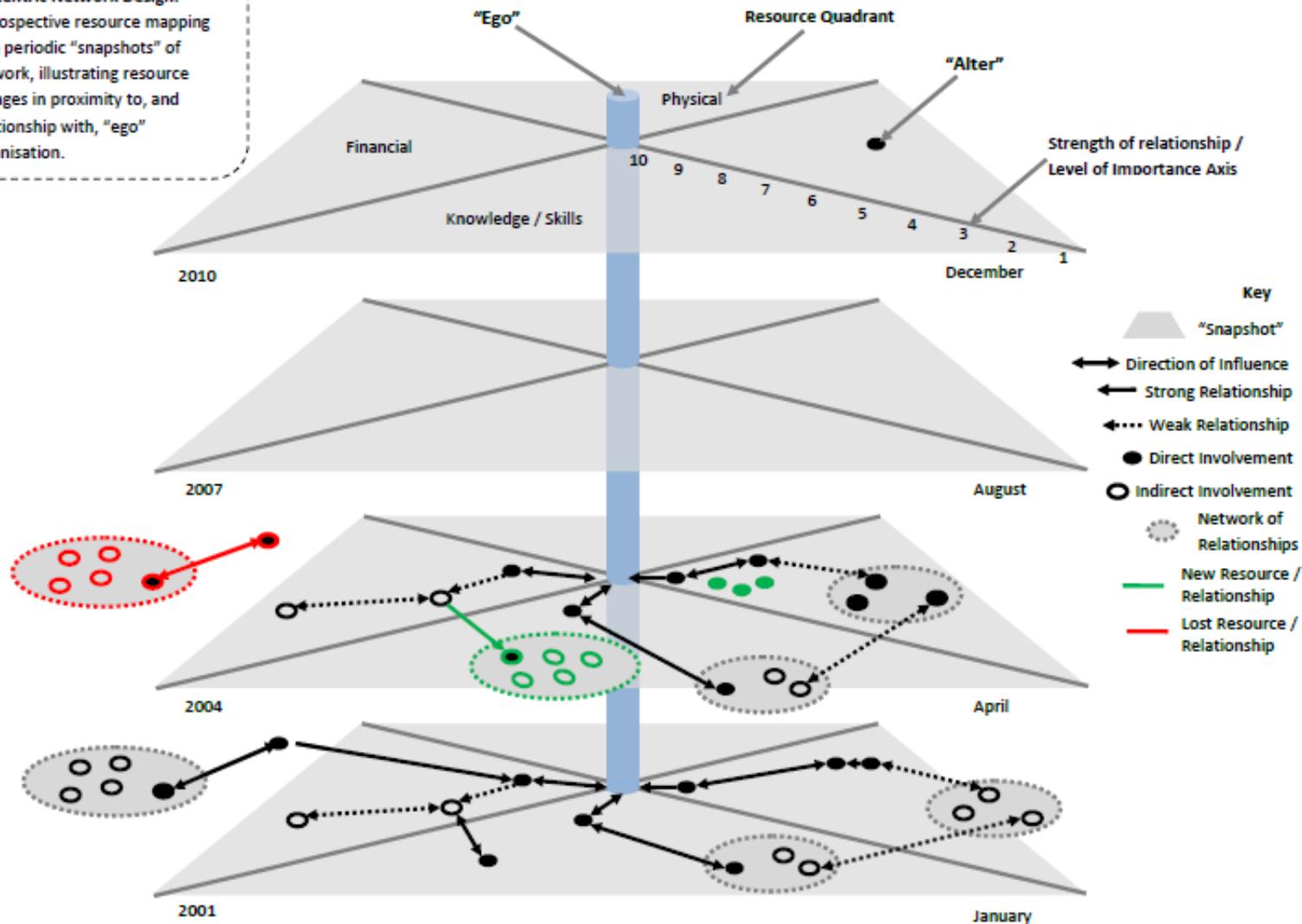
Family Trees: Method

The method used to map our network resource “family tree” is as follows;

- Select a case (“ego”) and probe using recall techniques to record all resources (“alters”) currently involved in the organisation and where they came from (repeat retrospectively for at least 2 further significant points in the organisation’s history)
- Categorise “alters” into resource types e.g. financial, technological, legal, human etc.
- Use closed question surveying to identify ego-alter relationship for three dimensions - importance of resource / strength of relationship / direction of influence
- Design mapping tool to provide visual representation of how alters have changed, been gained, or lost, over significant points in time
- Use visualisation to identify and track interesting cases for further qualitative investigation

Family Trees: Example "Tree"

Egocentric Network Design:
Retrospective resource mapping with periodic "snapshots" of network, illustrating resource changes in proximity to, and relationship with, "ego" organisation.



And Finally: Questions

- Family trees as a contribution to understanding ‘the sector’?
 - Relationship of research with policy – Capacity Building/Big Society?
 - Thoughts on the value and challenges of understanding resource transfer in below the radar groups – your experiences?
 - Reflections on the methodological design?
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Slide 12

JAP1

wonder if we need some specific questions here and should focus more on the methodological ones i.e. how can we record resources?
etc

Jenny Phillimore, 19/07/2010