

Equalities and Inequalities: Civil Society Organisations and Emerging Technologies

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**COST Workshop on Knowledge
Management**

Key Questions to Address

- Will access to digital technology and to digital skills broaden or bridge the gaps between elites and populations at large, between generations, between educational systems and the larger social sphere, between rich and poor parts of Europe and the world?
- Which strategies can be developed to use the new possibilities to bridge such differences?

Digital Technology Gaps: The Case of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

- Number and importance of CSOs has grown in many Western countries in response to neoliberal reforms
- CSOs generally lag behind government and private sector in resources
- Simultaneously, increased demands for accountability, professionalism, competition
- ICTs seen as means to achieve these...a means to better *manage knowledge*

Organisational KM Processes

Generating/Facilitating

Extracting/Capturing

Abstracting and Codifying

Organizing and Storing

Sharing/Distributing/Transferring

Each process requires unique resources (eg, skills, time, **technologies**)

Thus, there are multiple potential “gaps”

Why don't CSOs use ICTs more?

Reasons for not using Internet	Component	
	1	2
Lack of understanding of how it works	.826	.075
Too intimidating	.773	.250
Too busy to learn	.746	.189
No staff to manage it	.645	.371
Can't afford it financially	.574	.006
Not useful to the groups we serve	-.068	.911
Not sure of its usefulness	.289	.753
Stopped using the internet	.187	.525

1. Lack Resources

2. Don't see value

Bridging the Gap: A Community & Research Initiative

- 1 day conference for CSOs to learn social media applications
- Followed up by intensive, hands-on workshops
- Evaluation of effects:
 - Surveyed participants and non-participants on familiarity, use, and future plans
 - Action research with two participating organisations



 e-engage
your community

Bridging the Gap: Results

- Survey
 - Small but significant differences in familiarity and intention to use the Internet more
 - No difference in actual usage
 - ICT experience and budget were stronger effects
- Action Research
 - Initial enthusiasm → challenges of implementation
 - One organisation did not implement, but had plans, considered SM skills in hiring new staff
 - Other set up “virtual office”, but still unclear how much it will be used
 - Seeds have been planted, but...

ICT Implementation Notoriously Difficult

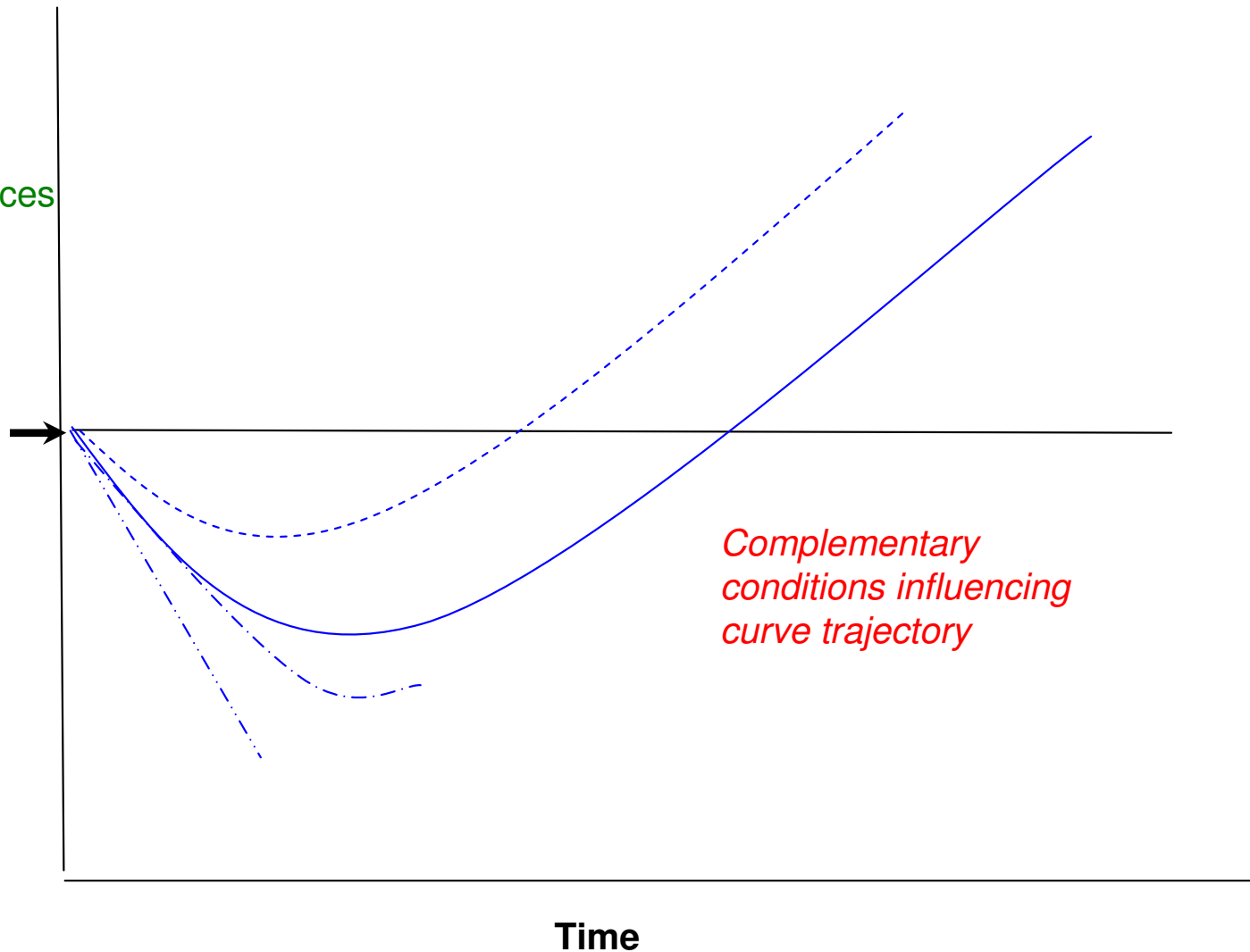
Positive consequences

- Efficiencies
- Social/cultural benefits
- Improved services

*Point of adoption/
investment*

Negative consequences

- Time loss
- \$ costs
- Stress
- Distraction from mission



Lessons for Knowledge Management

- KM experience in organisations has lessons for KM initiatives more broadly
- No quick fixes to bridge gaps
- ICTs, including social media, have potential as tools for KM
 - But notoriously difficult to “manage”
- Governments, CSOs, universities have a role to play in creating conditions in which success is possible