

COLLABORATING & CONNECTING: DIFFERENT MODES

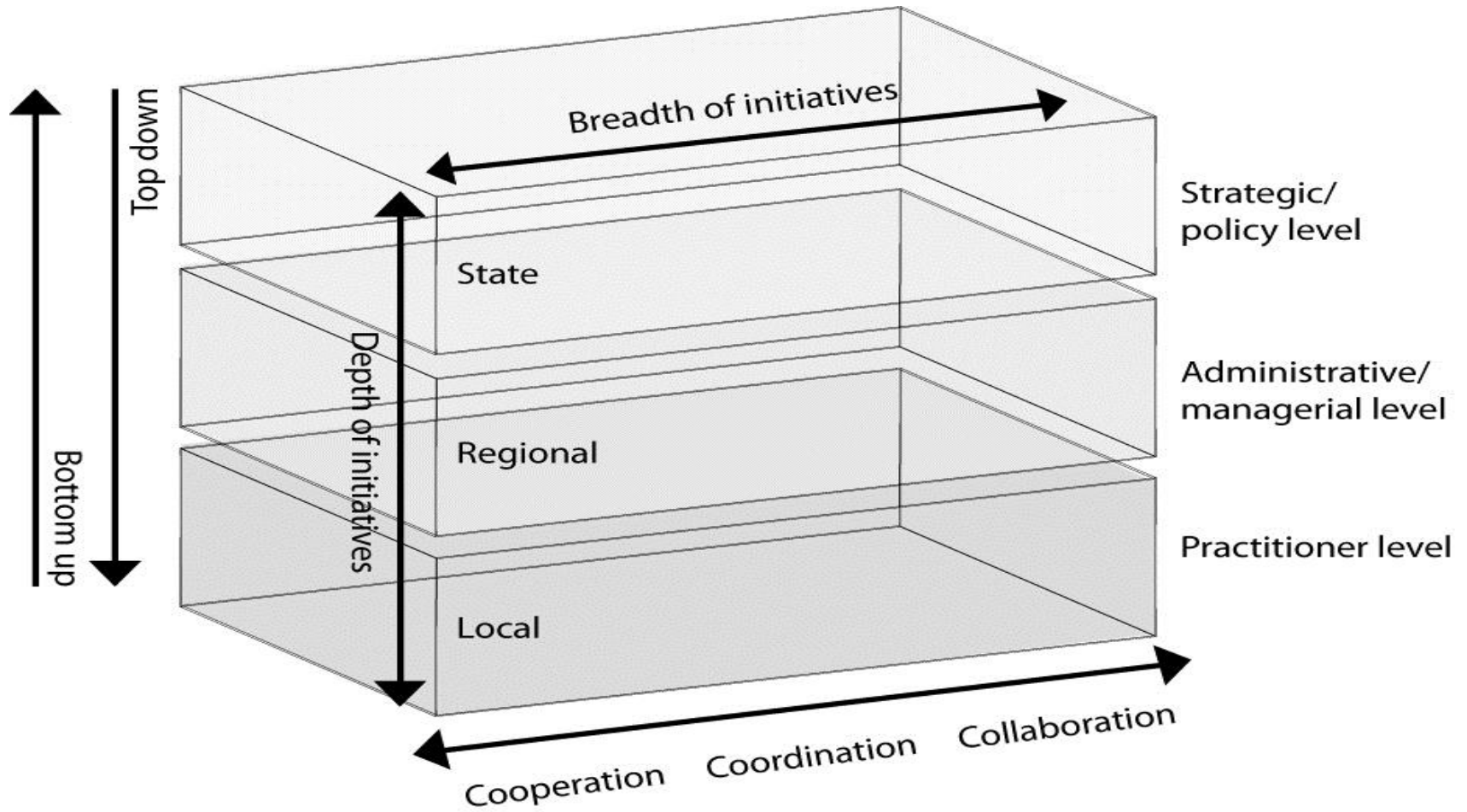
Professor Robyn Keast

Chair Collaborative Research Network: Policy &
Planning for Regional Sustainability Southern Cross
University

Background

- **Integration & connection is the way forward**
 - **Many models available**
- **Collaboration is the ‘holy grail’!**
- **BUT:**
- **Hard to achieve & even harder to sustain**
 - **50-70% business collaborations fail**
- **Cost of failure:**
 - **Lost opportunity costs**
 - **Transaction costs of relationship building, new structures etc.**
- **WHY:**
 - **Mismatch of purpose to integration model**
 - **Not really ready for collaboration & all it entails**
- **Upsizing push – amalgamations & mergers**

Integration - unpacked



Integration Continuum

COOPERATIVE

COORDINATIVE

COLLABORATIVE

Low trust — unstable relations	Medium trust — based on prior relations	High trust — stable relations
Infrequent communication flows	Structured communication flows	Thick communication flows
Known information sharing	'Project' related and directed information sharing	Tactical information sharing
Adjusting actions	Joint projects, joint funding, joint policy	Systems change
Independent/autonomous goals	Semi-independent goals	Dense interdependent relations and goals
Power remains with organisation	Power remains with organisations	Shared power
Resources — remain own	Shared resources around project	Pooled, collective resources
Commitment and accountability to own agency	Commitment and accountability to own agency and project	Commitment and accountability to the network first
Relational time frame requirement — short term	Relational time frame medium term — often based on prior projects	Relational time frame requirement — long term 3-5 years

Fit-for-purpose designs



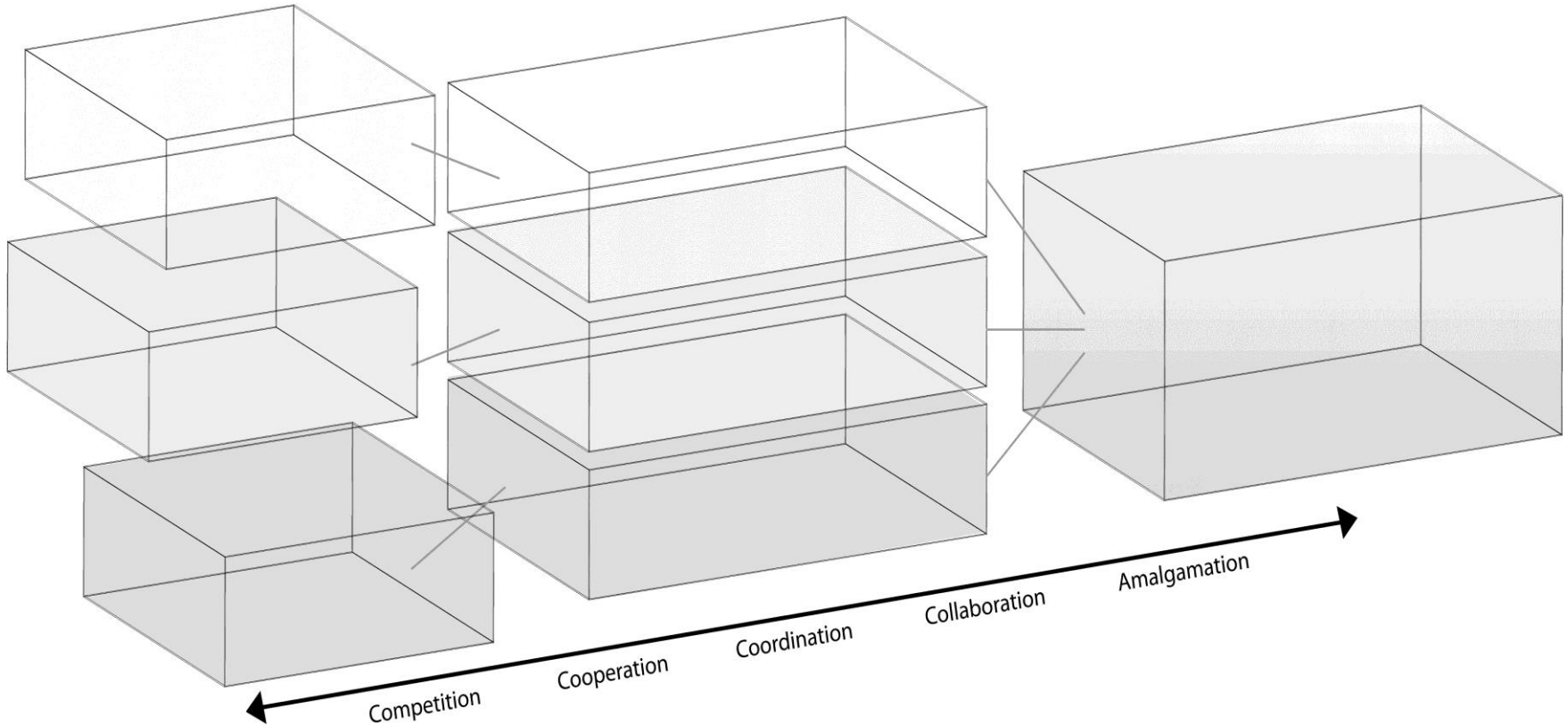
- All relations have merit & application
- Approaches & relational strength must be *requisite to purpose*
- Independent, adjusting actions & information sharing: cooperation
- Do same, but more efficiently through joint working, aligned resources & action: coordination
- Systems change: collaboration
- Also – need to consider the vertical relations!
 - Linking across layers, into resources, legitimacy & power/influence

Other modes: Upsizing: Some thoughts

- **Amalgamation & 'Biggs' (large nonprofits & for-profits)**
- Attractive benefits: pulls together elements - cuts cost, reduces number of smaller, struggling bodies; easier for liaison; greater capacity & capability for performance
- Possible consequences
 - 'Shadow Government'
 - Loss of vibrancy
 - Concentration on securing \$ not service
 - Commitment?
 - Competing modes

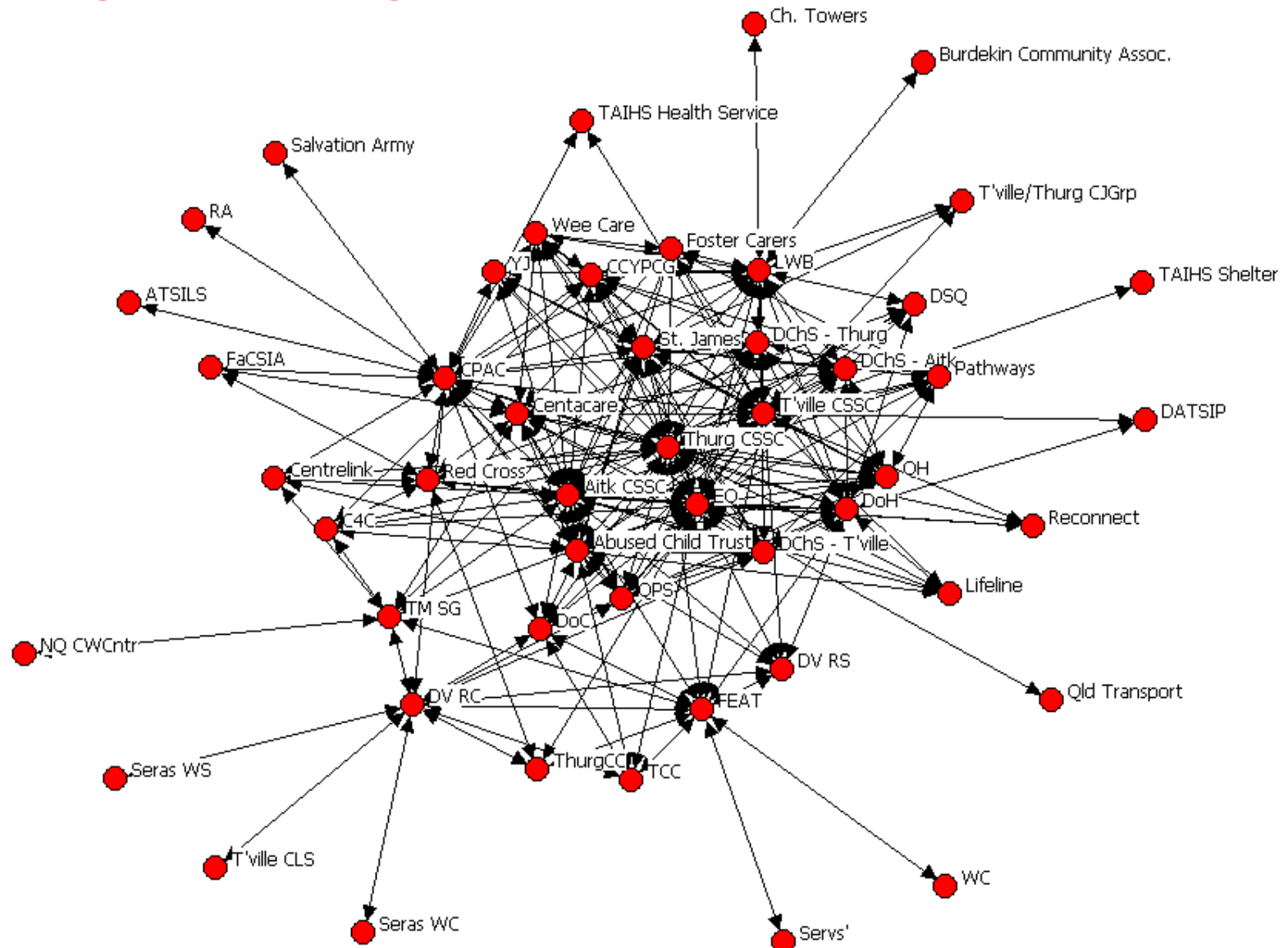
What could happen ...!

Breadth and depth of Initiatives across strategic, administrative/managerial and practitioner levels as well as state, regional and local levels.

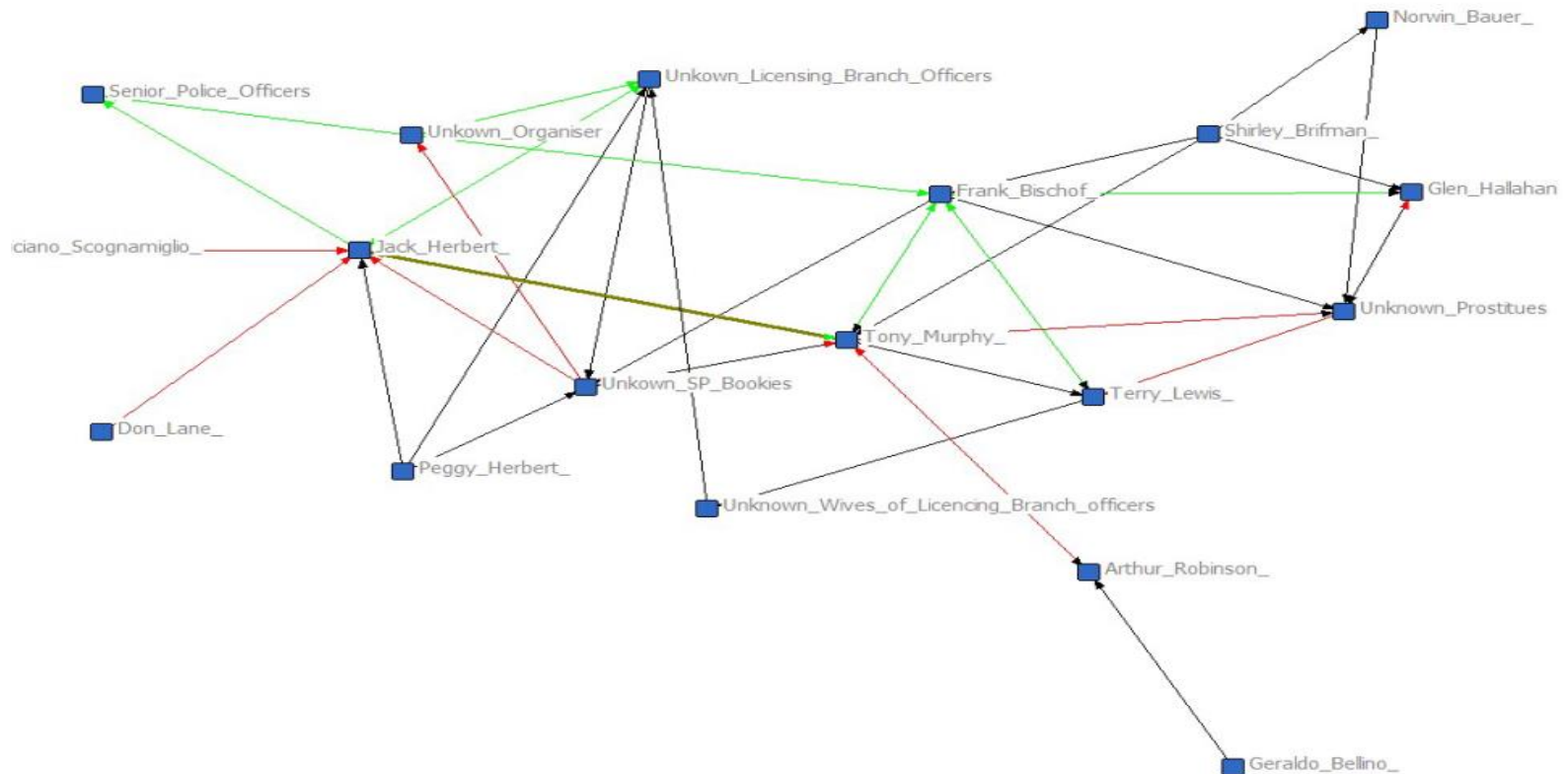


BRIGHT & DARK NETWORKS – WHAT CAN BE LEARNT FROM THE DARK SIDE?

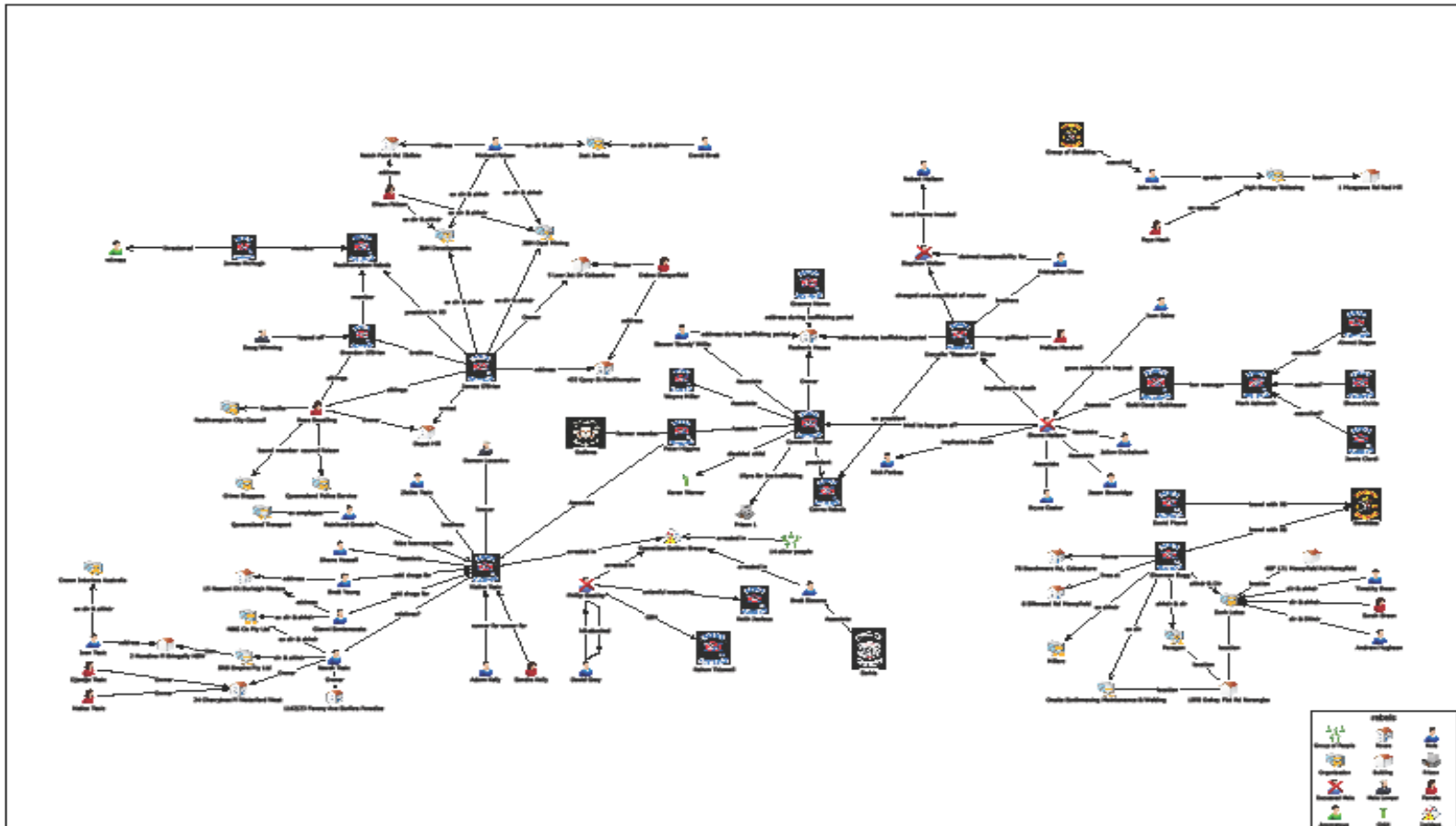
Social Services: Joint planning & programming



'The Joke' – Police Corruption in Qld -



Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs - Rebels Gold Coast



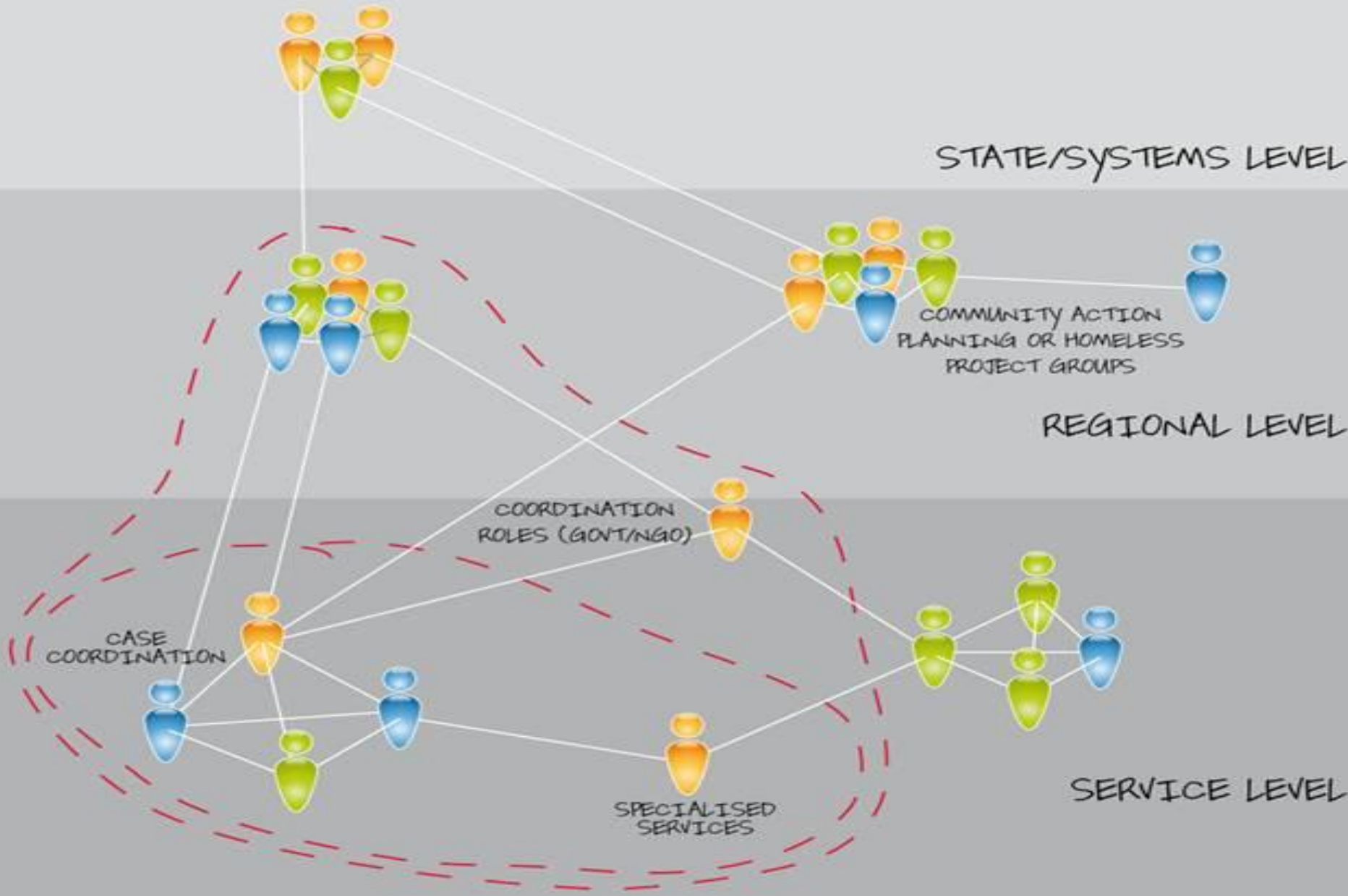
Comparison

Bright

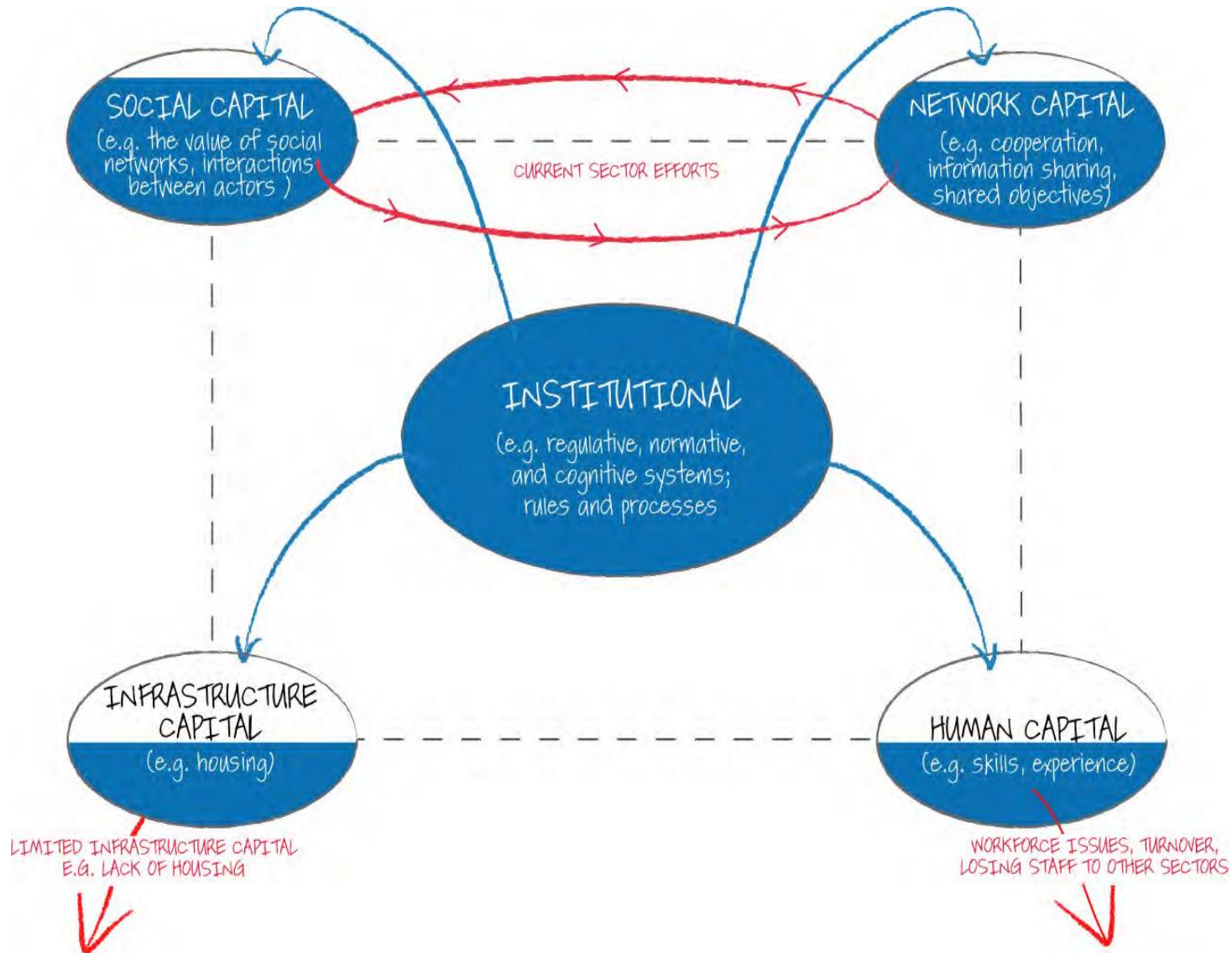
- Aim for ^ dense interactions
- High reliance on interpersonal relationships as 'glue that binds' & reciprocity
- Take time to build & deliver results, high transaction costs (constant attention to relationship building)
- Vulnerable to changes in context, shifting of actors, funding (+ & -); poor design
- Easily disrupted, takes time to rebuild reputation etc.

Dark

- Based on loose connections
- One way flows -
- Relationships less important – more the exchange & reputation
- Very resilient (last many years), flexible & act fast, low transaction costs
- 'Ceramic' – very strong - vulnerable to chinks on the edge or major attacks to the core
- Hard to disrupt – but easy to rebuild (exchange not trust based)



Sector assessment

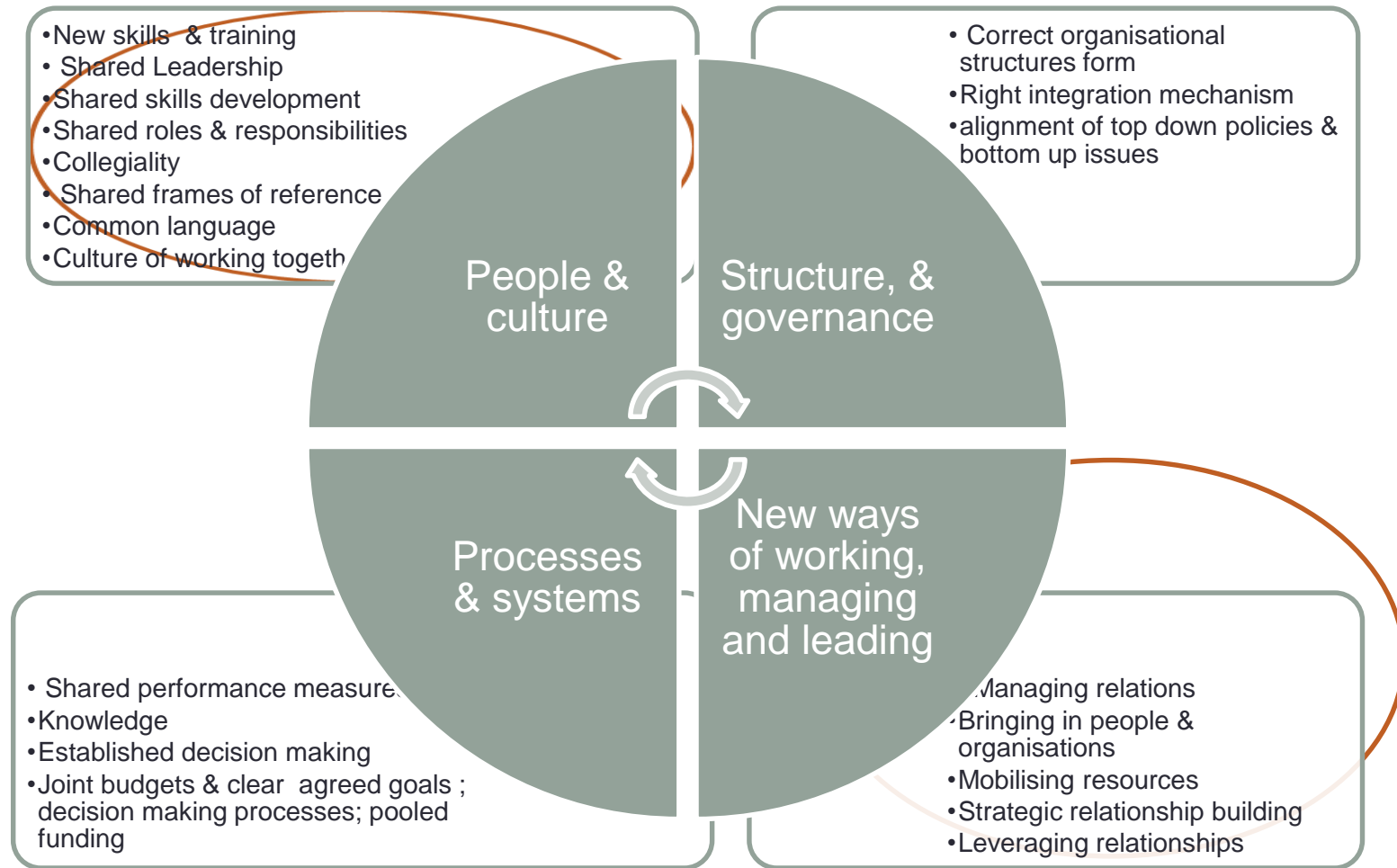


Collaboration ... not business as usual !

- Collaboration – brings together disparate & often previously competing agencies together to achieve what can't be delivered by working alone.
- To be effective participating organisations must – realise their interdependency, let go of autonomy, share resources & power and risk & rewards – be willing to work for collective good

Not always an easy undertaking!!

FILLING OUT THE GREY SPACE



Do we really need to do this?

Collaboration – high rewards – high resources & risks

- Is there a genuine need to collaborate ?
 - Would some other form of ‘working together’ suffice?
- What are you looking to achieve?
- Are there any other ‘drivers’ for collaboration
 - Funding; legitimacy; ‘right thing to do’?
- What are the collective outcomes?
- What will my organisation ‘get’ out of the collaboration?

Change ready?

- Collaboration demands change – people & organisations
 - Institutional arrangements, policies, ways of working and funding streams
 - **Is your organisation ready & able to make these changes?**
- Does it have the organisational structures, systems & processes – management commitment & resources to enable & sustain collaboration?
- Does your organisation resist change – or unable to generate degree of change needed?

Capability & capacity to work collaboratively?

Collaboration costs \$, time & effort

- Assess organisation's capability to contribute sufficient resources
 - Results take time to accrue – can require a long term commitment
- Time is a crucial resource
 - Time invested in building new relationships & sustaining existing ones
 - Ramping up & scaling down as necessary – monitoring
- Demand high level of intellectual energy & effort from staff
 - Might reduce their focus on parent organisations' activities
 - Weigh internal needs against those of the collaboration - worth the investment
- Collaborative competencies
 - Different skill set - often not currently appreciated or valued by organisations
 - Skills assessment

Able & willing to delegate decision making?

- Representatives have sufficient decision-making authority
 - Level of authority = the issues being addressed
- Representatives accountable to collaboration & organisation
 - Can create tensions unless this has been agreed to at the start
- Specific support of staff to work outside of boundaries
 - Not just boundary spanning – boundary crushing!



Can have implications where parent organisations are not locally based

Core organisational & personal collaborative competencies

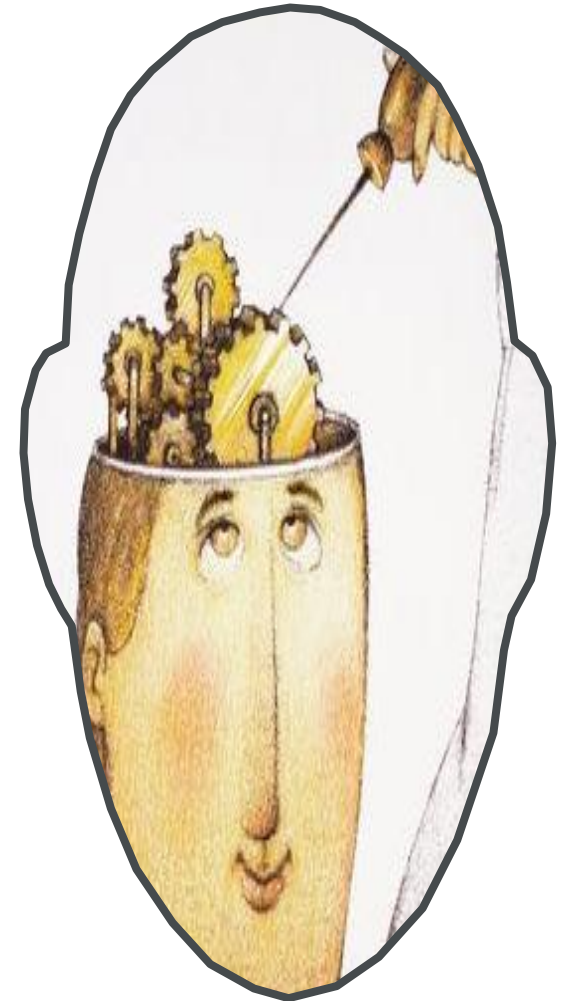
Organisational	Systems & Processes	Personal Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance: fit-for-purpose designs • Management : Across boundaries Driving, molding maneuvering Leadership: Dispersed & process catalyst 	<p>Adjusted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance & measurement evaluation • Accountability Processes • HR approaches • Culture of working together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing • Group work skills • Negotiation skills (interest based) • Political savvy • Process analysis • Listening, learning, linking & leveraging

Open to scrutiny?

- Be prepared for & accept critical examination of operations
 - Frank exchange of views vs scoring points
 - Genuine contribution vs fence sitting
 - Such actions undermine the effectiveness of the collaborative effort and quickly damage an organisation's reputation.
- Each organisation and its representative must commit, up front, to actively contribute and share with other participants in the collaboration.

Prepared to be accountable to collaborative agreements?

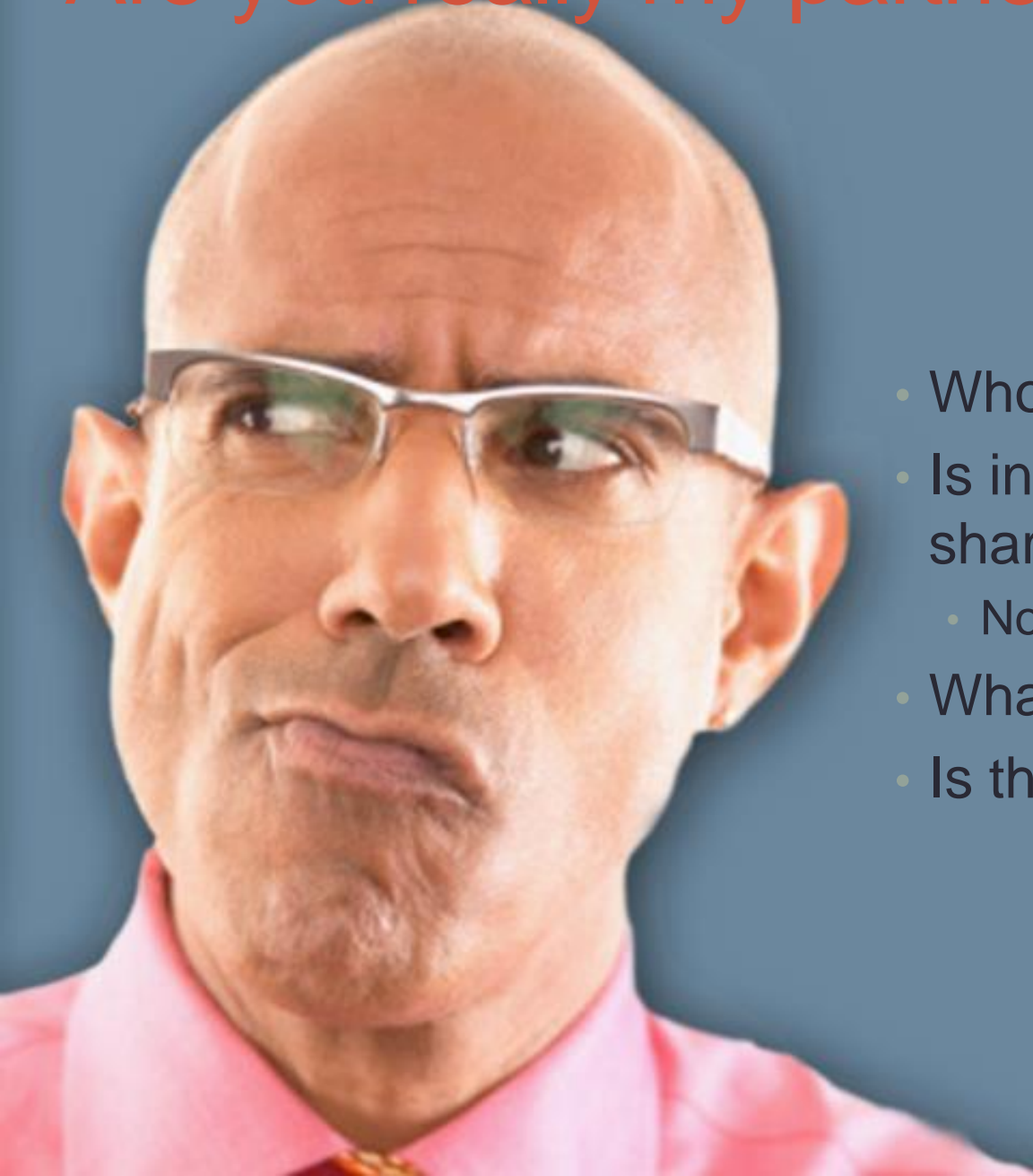
- Expectation for P/O to genuinely thrive to collective goals
 - As opposed to individual goals/self interest
 - Accountable to collaboration & P/O
 - Dual accountability function is difficult
- Are there appropriate structures & processes to support & sustain collaboration?
- Balance organisational priorities & commitments against those of the collaboration



Implications & conclusions

- Collaboration can produce great outcomes!
- Not everything needs to be a collaboration & most collaborations will face challenges
 - Collaborations should not be entered into lightly
 - Be strategic & deliberate in decisions and actions
- Organisations must: ask the big questions
 - know what they are looking for in a collaboration; determine the level of commitment required; your capacity and ability to act in new ways; and assess your organisation's internal tolerances for participation and risk.
 - Weigh the potential benefits & challenges against business as usual

Are you really my partner?



- Who has the power?
- Is information genuinely shared?
 - Not just base information
- What is the trust level?
- Is there commitment?