**RNI Track « Sustaining networks of innovation for sustaining innovation »**

**Corinne Grenier** (KEDGE BS, France) and **Ewan Oiry** (ESG-UQAM, Montréal, Canada)

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Sustaining diffusion of innovation and its navigation from one context to larger contexts is questioning from various perspectives, especially when we consider the field of Healthcare, which is reputed highly fragmented and institutionalized. Consequently, one main concern is to investigate how to sustain diffusion, which is never replication of initial experimentations of local novelty.

We propose to investigate diffusion and scaling-up through Network of Innovation and Translation, anchored in French sociology works and Scandinavian translation works (Callon, 1986; Boxenbaum and Pedersen, 2009). Broadly said, diffusion is viewed as the extension of networks of actors progressively interested in and enrolled in so that original ideas and practices could escape their initial contextual loci to expand to larger environments. Translation consists then in operating deformations (or transformations) of initial ideas and practices so that to fit with other local contexts of deployment (i.e. "*the process in which ideas and models are adapted to local contexts as they travel across time and space*", Lamb & Currie, 2012). Solving controversies among actors enrolled remains then one critical issue for securing the extension of networks and translation operations.

Such journey remains highly complex, especially when we consider some tensions such as generalization versus contextualization. It is also made complex due to the specific characteristics of the healthcare field, reputed to be strongly institutionalized and fragmented. The academic community largely call for new investigations to deepen our understanding of networks and translation for innovation diffusion. And we propose several questionings around the following theme: "*How to sustain networks of innovation for sustaining innovation?*"

- **Networks and agency**

One critical view consists in questioning the ability of actors in structuring network and in developing new ties for expanding innovation scope. Agency in networks generally investigates the purposes, skills and motivations of actors for orchestrating networks (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). However, agency is one of complex issue in institutionalized field, when reproduction is dominant and prevents any entrepreneurial and agential behavior (the paradox of the embeddedness in institutional entrepreneurship works). Another critical investigation consists in recognizing how the journey of innovation is made difficult because of "passive agents" not encouraged or supported to take part in the extension of networks, either because they are neither pro nor con, or because they have no opinion to defend. And finally, agency for sustaining network call for investigating specific roles such as boundary-actors or specific competences such as leadership, when perspectives of open innovation and coproduction of care enlighten a more collective point of view (leading to consider a kind of boundary-collective actors, as well as shared leadership).

- **The strength of ties or the strength of ideas?**

When we consider radical or disruptive innovation, as well as institutional innovation, we are largely encouraged to consider the new ideas that are supposed to transform system. And we could admit how the healthcare field is the receptacle of a very large set of such ideas, such as: trajectory, patient-centered care, coproduction, integration, lean management, Mindfulness…. Such terms can be seen as "management fashion" (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders & Van Veen, 2001) that support intensive management discourse and are so popular that they attract the attention of actors and induce behavior and organizational changes. Innovation journey then depends of the attractiveness of new

ideas (or practices) and question, in a strategic view, how to make such ideas or practices popular or fashionable.

- **The institutionalization of innovation?**

We question how extension of networks permits institutionalization of innovation and profound changes in the so highly fragmented and institutionalized healthcare field. Institutionalization can be defined as the dissemination of ideas through translation, whilst translation could lead to eventual dilution of the initial transformative potential. One view regards the potential of theorizing changes as one critical process for institutionalizing innovations (Munir, 2005), when theorization is defined as "*the process whereby institutional roles and practices are abstracted into comprehensive and compelling theoretical models that foster institutional change and the subsequent diffusion of those roles and practices*" (Mena & Suddaby, 2016). It consists in promulgating abstract ideas as "ready-to-wear" concept (Nielsen et al., 2014) through framing the need to change and justifying added-value of the innovative solutions. But the potential of transformation permitted through network rests then on a complex tension between abstraction and contextualization.

- **Networks of (very) heterogeneous stakeholders**

Healthcare sector is characterized by a very high diversity of stakeholders. As pluralistic organizations (Grenier, Denis, 2017), healthcare organizations bring together a diversity of professionals, audiences and stakeholders. As a result, power is diffused and objectives are divergent. In addition, these pluralistic organizations deal with numerous and diversified stakeholders in the sector: pharmaceutical industry, public and legal regulations, cost control, etc. This diversity is a challenge for networks of innovation. Then, we question how networks that link patients, families, hospitals, professionals, pharmaceutical industries, regions, public regulators, etc. may be able to build common ground that able them to develop and diffuse innovations.

- **Networks and management tools, networks of management tool**

Management tool play a major role in creating, stabilizing or developing networks of innovation (see for example the concept of "Obligatory Passage Point", Callon (1986)). Analyzing sustainable networks for innovation, we pay special attention to the role that management tools play in networks: how and why they are built by different stakeholders, how they are used or refused by some of theme, how they are inscribed in controversies that create and/or threat networks of innovation. Management tools can even turn into "machines de gestion" (Girin, 1981; Berry, 1983). Networks of tools can produce unexpected effects .

- **Articulating Actor-Network Theory and Translation Theory**

This track welcomes too conceptual papers that propose an analysis of complementarity, tensions or contradictions between these two conceptual framework dedicated to analysis of diffusion of innovation : the Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 1986) and the Translation Theory (Boxenbaum and Pedersen, 2009). Developed in different disciplines, conceptual perspectives and geographical areas, these two conceptual frameworks have lots in common, lot of differences and lot of to discuss (Wæraas & Nielsen, 2016; O'Mahoney J., 2016; Akrich et al., 2002). This track welcomes all conceptual papers that propose to investigate cross fertilization of these theories. We also welcome all papers that discuss other conceptual perspectives able to enrich all these two theories.

**Papers may address, but are not limited to the following themes:**

- ✓ How to manage network so that to make new ideas enough strong to become attractive?

- ✓ How to manage network so that to avoid dilution of transformative potential of the initial ideas?
- ✓ The role and configuration of collectives of boundary-actors or of collective leadership in shaping and managing network and its extension Political and cognitive levers securing the extension of network despite the fragmentation and the pluralistic characteristics The production of "*proofs that its works*" during the extension of the network and the journey of innovation How networks succeed in transforming organizations and healthcare field?
- ✓ The heterogeneity of stakeholders in innovation networks,
- ✓ The role of tools in innovation networks
- ✓ The conceptual discussions between theories able to analyze diffusion of innovation

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