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# International Collaborations on Health, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS

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*Session F: International Collaborations in Gender and Science*

# OBJECTIVES

- *Describe* some observations about *STEM*
- *Share* some meanings about collaboration and some drivers
- *Illustrate* a few examples of my own work in international collaborations
- *Indicate* a few assumptions and challenges
- *Provide* some tentative concluding remarks



# STEM AND SOCIETY

- STEM investments are deeply embedded in society
- STEM work should ideally also relate to valuable work in the social sciences and humanities - both are critical to understanding of the world, cultures, knowledge of and relationships within society
- Society is not neutral; highly gendered as divisions are deeply embedded
- “Glass obstacles” capture unequal gendered processes
- Representation of untapped talent enables participation as it ensures growing an economy while simultaneously promoting social justice

# COLLABORATION

*Has a telos – a necessary purpose*

- Value add
  - Cornerstone of academic and scholarly life that is key to moving the science system
  - Enables sharing of resources and expertise
  - Donor driven at times
  - Working together produces better teaching and research & might even enable better value for money
  - Enables researchers to participate in a network of cutting-edge and innovative activity
  - Key to cultural, economic and developmental importance
  - **Creating jobs and livelihoods**
    - **Expanding infrastructure**
  - **Transitioning to a low-carbon economy**
  - **Transforming urban and rural spaces**
  - **Improving education and training**
    - **Providing quality health care**
      - **Building a capable state**
  - **Fighting corruption and enhancing accountability**
  - **Transforming society and uniting the nation**
- (All of the above is also about improvement of social life with social consequences → have policy and programmatic implications and are also knowledge-driven)**

*South African National Development Plan Vision for 2030 (2011)*



# COLLABORATION *ctd*

- More than just coming together for data collection, conferences, technical support, *also about* strategic and political ends (Wagner 1997)
- Collaboration can itself be viewed as a resource, offering access to skills, knowledge, techniques, and intellectual diversity and companionship (Katz, J.S., and Martin, B. R. (1997)
- *What* determines when one might collaborate? *What* are the motivations for building, maintaining, or dissolving collaborative network relations? *What* determines with whom one collaborates?
- Collaboration is an iterative process reflecting various activities, stages, and contextual features (Sargent and Waters 2004; Sonnenwald 2007).
- Is dependent on the ways in which research is organised, conducted, and located, i.e., on the culture and organisation of science (Fox and Mohapatra 2007; Wagner 2008; Drori et al. 2003).
- Collaboration process requires attention to work groups, practices, and climates that might stimulate or depress collaboration and productivity
- Collaborative relationship is shaped by the resources that any individual scientist brings to the process
- Intellectual capital includes both codified and tacit knowledge (Zucker et al. 2007).
- Codified knowledge – typically operationalised as publications – provides the means by which collaborative productivity has largely been measured.
- Tacit knowledge, however, refers to individual skills and experience, and the way in which it is engaged is through collaborations (Zucker et al. 2007; Hicks and Narin 2001).
- Collaboration is in effect not a neutral process –but rather a *social process*

# DRIVERS OF COLLABORATION

## *About Science Capital*

### KNOWN DRIVERS

- Promote diversity of perspectives to enhance knowledge production (multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary toolboxes)
- Stimulate capacity building
- Stimulate and increase research funding
- To develop solutions that resonate around the world
- To enhance prestige, visibility, reputation, development of a brand and have global import

### ❑ POLICY DRIVEN:

- the competitiveness and sustainability of the domestic research system
- Boost domestic economic growth;
- a commitment to work together on common problems, from climate change to poverty;
- and a commitment to internationalisation and a global citizenry more generally.

### LESS KNOWN DRIVERS

- Collaboration between academics and scholars with different epistemic and ideological perspectives (a barrier but also a source of creativity)
- Quick delivery of capacity/research and low costs through project-specific collaborations (temporary alliances)

# INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

- HIV and Sexual Risk Among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Tshwane (HSRC with Columbia University, OUT LGBT; NIH Funded; 4 years)
- **MAC AIDS Fund leadership initiative: HIV Prevention in South Africa (HSRC Columbia University and UCLA, 3 years; MAC Funding)**
- **Raising the visibility of Lesbian, Bisexual and Other Women who have Sex with Women (WSW) in relation to HIV & AIDS: A Cross-country project addressing health and community building for advocacy (4 Countries in Southern Africa; Columbia University; Funders)**
- African Same-Sex Sexualities and Gender Diversity (HIVOS funded; Kenya, New York; Amsterdam & South Africa)







# SOME CONCLUSIONS

- Long-term alliances are contingent on building *trust* in both personal and professional relations to yield good results
- Beyond research excellence, you also gain knowledge of other research systems and over time build strategic partnerships
- Joint development and sharing of datasets
- Sharing infrastructures
- Co-authorship, institution, country AND Citations are not the only determinants of quality (Katz and Martin, 1997)
- WHAT WOULD be good indicators/measures for assessing collaborations?

HOWEVER, based on experience we might also need to consider that:

- Scientific collaboration is *complex* and when gender issues added to the mix – another layer of complexity also added (gender but one critical determinant within a complex web of other dynamic processes)
- Power relations (race, gender, geography, class) are of equal importance in the broader context of network diversity
- Processes that lead to collaboration and productivity outcomes need further analysis



# References

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- **Thank You!**
- **Ke a leboga!**
- **Ngiyabonga!**
- **Baie dankie!**

