



REIFRAMING: Seeing something else

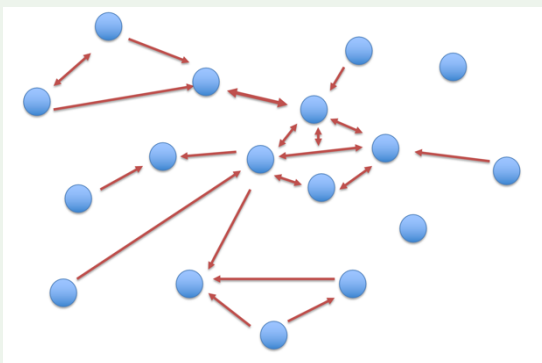
This Week's **Research Reflection** **Networks and Friendship dynamics**

The Creative Power of Networks

These are two different main perspectives when we consider organizations. The traditional perspective looks at organizations as hierarchical areas of responsibilities, where people are supposed to respect borders, and communicate through formal channels. The other perspective is to look at organizations as networks of relationships, formal and informal, that cut across borders. This perspective says: the organization becomes intelligent when people share knowledge. If the relationship works, the project succeeds.



How would you draw the map that describes people around you? Who could be you in this picture? Who is giving information and knowledge?

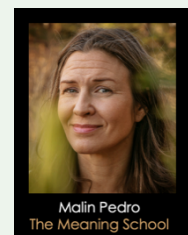


The Network itself and your network position influence your possibility for innovation. How? Networks are dynamic and evolve over time, as do individuals' positions within them. We can reshape social networks inside an organization through leadership programs, as they create a powerful opportunity to integrate communication channels and facilitate

knowledge exchange, that would not otherwise occur. This potential is truly unique to programs, provided we challenge the traditional view of who should be involved in a program. In reflecting on the role that networks play in creating innovation I today drawn my insights from what is shared in two academic articles, [one](#) is "Networks, creativity and time: staying creative through brokerage and network rejuvenation" by Soda et al. (2021). The other one written by J. Björk and M. Magnusson. Link [here](#). "Where Do Good Innovation Ideas Come From? Exploring the Influence of Network Connectivity on Innovation Idea Quality".

Malin Pedro, Curator and Program Director

This reflection is part of my discovery journey. If you are interested in reading more, contact me.

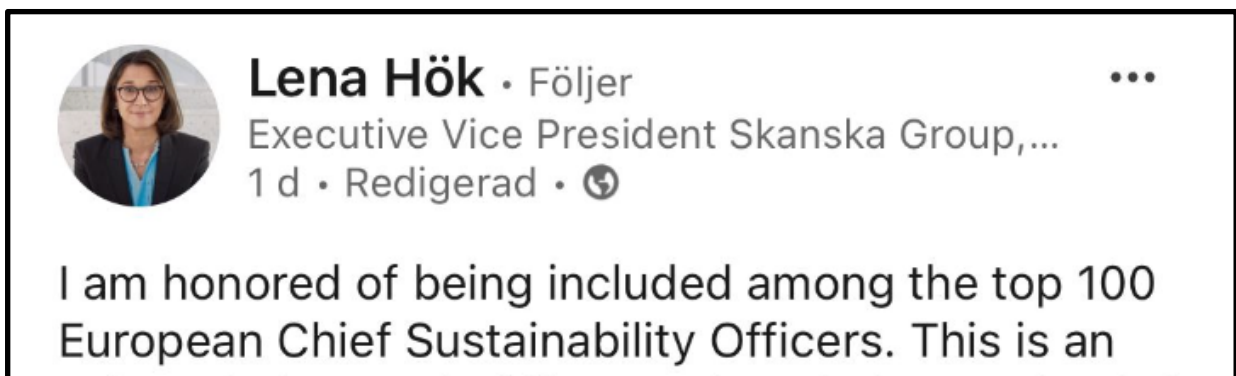


Malin Pedro
The Meaning School



My former mentor, Stefan Dahlberg, head of Competencecompagniet once said: "Nothing is impossible with a good network." He often said: "I can connect you two to each other," and then let these people bring their connections to life. This fall we traveled to Istanbul for a program. A key to make it possible –both finding a conference venue and understanding the cultural context– was our network. Two network friends played a crucial role in helping us navigate.

Lena Hök, Executive Vice President at Skanska Group, has recently been listed among top sustainability leaders. Imagine what can happen with these 100 sustainability officers within her personal network.



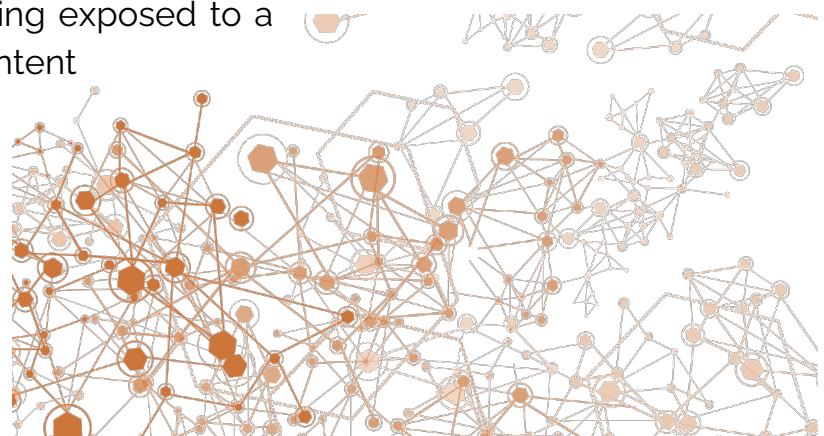
The image shows a screenshot of a LinkedIn post. On the left is a circular profile picture of Lena Hök, a woman with glasses and a dark blazer. To the right of the picture, the text reads: "Lena Hök • Följer" followed by three dots. Below that, it says "Executive Vice President Skanska Group,..." and "1 d • Redigerad •" with a globe icon. The main text of the post is: "I am honored of being included among the top 100 European Chief Sustainability Officers. This is an

The people you work and interact with, play a vital role in shaping your ability to stay creative over time. Two important insights from the first article:

1. **Diverse Networks** Fuel Creativity

Being connected to different groups of people who don't know each other (an "open network") and being exposed to a variety of ideas (content diversity) enhance your ability to generate creative ideas.

Conversations with individuals from different backgrounds or industries can spark unexpected insights and perspectives.





2. Networks Need Renewal to Sustain Creativity

If your network remains the same over a long period, you risk falling into habitual thinking and routine ways of collaborating. This "rigidity" limits your creative potential. To avoid this, it's crucial to **rejuvenate your network** by forming new connections. **Meeting new people** can shake up entrenched patterns and inspire ideas.

Mapping Collaboration for Social Innovation

When approaching social innovation, analyze the collaborative dynamics both within and across organizational units. Key questions to guide this process include:

1. Collaboration Identification

- Which organizational units or individuals are collaborating?
- What patterns emerge in these collaborations?

2. Strength of Connections

- How frequent are these collaborations?
- What is the strength of the connections? (Consider the quality of relationships and communication as a measure of strength.)

3. Engagement in Idea Generation

- How many ideas has each actor been involved in?
- What is the spread of involvement across different actors?

4. Value of Ideas

- How many of these ideas have been deemed valuable by the organization?
- What is the ratio of valuable ideas to total ideas per actor?

Reflecting on these questions can reveal opportunities to strengthen relationships and improve communication. Consider creating a map of your collaborations, using the strength of connections and frequency of interactions as indicators.

Social innovation thrives when we can see not just the people, **but the patterns and potential in their connections.**



Roles That Drive Social Innovation

The second article focuses on how individuals play critical roles depending **on how they connect and interact within networks**. Here are some key roles and their impact:

1. Highly Connected Individuals
 - These are people with **extensive networks**, maintaining many contacts across different groups. They act as hubs, facilitating the flow of information and ideas.
2. Individuals with Strong Ties
 - These individuals have **close, trusting relationships** characterized by openness and robust feedback. Such ties foster collaboration and innovation.
3. Individuals with Access to Weak Ties
 - People who cultivate "weak ties", connections to distant groups, **gain exposure to novel ideas** and perspectives, fueling creativity and radical innovation. If they dare.
4. Boundary Spanners Across Knowledge Domains
 - These individuals connect and **integrate knowledge from different fields**, enabling cross-disciplinary insights.
5. Bridge Builders Who Span Structural Holes
 - These are **individuals who connect** disconnected groups, enabling others to build their own new relationships.

The challenges of structural holes (n. 5): a balancing act

Bridging structural holes comes with a unique challenge: it places individuals in a position of power, as they control access to valuable connections. The temptation is often to guard these connections for personal gain. However, research shows that being generous, facilitating introductions and helping others build their networks, leads to better long-term outcomes, particularly for fostering social innovation.



Help people to Build Broader and Stronger Networks

To amplify the impact of social innovation, focus on helping others expand their networks. Whether by sharing your contacts or connecting people across groups, fostering collaboration strengthens the collective potential for creativity and meaningful change.

Networks and friendship

A particular and familiar type of network connection is friendship. What if friendship permeates into our organizational life? Innovation often thrives in spaces of trust and openness. Friends can more easily challenge and inspire one another. While professional networks can provide the diversity needed for new ideas, friendships ensure the depth of collaboration required to bring those ideas to life. It is perhaps in that boundary, **where emotion meets logic**, that the most unexpected and exciting ideas can emerge.



*“Numerous artists, writers, composers, scientists, social reformers, and other creative people report that a collaborative circle played in indispensable part in their **development**. Working together they make **extraordinary advances in their field**.”*

*Michael Farrell, Collaborative Circles
- Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work*

Painting: "[The Family Reunion](#)", Frédéric Bazille 1867-78

Remember, networks thrive when **generosity replaces control**, and the ripple effects of connection create lasting innovation. How can you act as a bridge and empower others network today?

I conclude my logbook by linking to my partner's [HBS article](#) on innovation, co-authored with P. Bellis, which explores the value of pair constellations in fostering innovation. Over the past 4.5 years, Roberto and I have collaborated to design and deliver new programs together.



Mission with this logbook - a seed and a space

"In reading a novel, any novel, we have to know perfectly well that the whole thing is nonsense, and then, while reading, believe every word of it. Finally, when we're done with it, we may find... that we're a bit different from what we were before we read it, that we have changed a little, as if by having met a new face, crossed a street we never crossed before. **But it is very hard to say just**

what we learned, how we were changed... The truth is a matter of the imagination."

(Ursula K. Le Guin)



The Meaning School
is a garden



Take care of the blueberries