

A close-up photograph of three ants on a tree branch. One ant is at the top, another is in the middle, and a third is at the bottom. They are all facing right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

Deeper collaboration

2.6 million – number of patent applications p.a.

7 million – number of trademark applications p.a.

A close-up photograph of an ant nest entrance. The nest is made of dark, porous material. There are several circular openings of different sizes. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

Deeper collaboration

Partnerships shift to become more dynamic, long-term, democratised, multi-party collaborations. Competitor alliances and wider public participation drive regulators to create new legal frameworks for open, empathetic collaboration.

Given the challenges we are facing, many see the need for a different way of working across and between organisations. The time when one company alone could develop scalable solutions is fast disappearing, and even traditional cross-industry partnerships are unlikely to have the resources and reach required. Addressing some of the big meaty future challenges will rely on deeper and wider collaboration that will no longer be driven solely by intellectual property and value considerations; instead more dynamic, agile, long-term, democratised and multi-party cooperation is on the horizon.

Take rising air pollution. Tackling this will demand partnerships across transportation operators, energy providers, city planners, public health organisations, governments, regulators, financiers and citizen groups. Or, addressing the obesity challenge isn't just about food and drink companies changing direction but also involving healthcare professionals, behavioural psychologists, regulators, transport and city planners as well as educational institutions and the media. The type of cooperation needed to innovate and address these and similar challenges will require the collaborating organisations to rethink the fundamental nature of how such partnerships are designed, operated and rewarded. Bilateral agreements, while easier to establish and execute than global ones, are implicitly limiting.

The residual approach to intellectual property creation, ownership and trading is more of a barrier to collaboration than an enabler. While concepts such as patent pools have worked within industries, be that sewing machines and cars a century ago or Bluetooth, MPEG and DVD standards in the

past 20 years, some see that they too are not the right model for the deeper and wider levels of collaboration envisaged for the future. The answer could be emerging in the way we increasingly collaborate around content production online via layered authorship - copyright is shared as more of us collaborate and swap ideas as thoughts are built upon again and again. As a result, multiple authors are recognised and shared information is not owned by any individual. Clearly, remuneration models for collaborative programmes need to evolve.

If we are indeed going to undertake more pragmatic The residual approach to intellectual property creation, ownership and trading is more of a barrier to collaboration than an enabler. oncing the need for companies to work together globally and locally will involve making compromises, and we may even see a fundamental shift in how we measure success – away from GDP and income towards a more holistic perspective of progress. Some large, well-established incumbent organisations may argue for short-term incremental shifts, but it's hoped that, in time, the big banks, energy companies and other controllers of the status quo will shift their positions. Pivotal in this shift is the expectation that many will either seek or be compelled to take a longer-term view around systemic change and that will imply wider collaboration.

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The future of interconnected systems



Within this, the role of public-private partnerships seems to be in ascendance. Although often criticised in some areas in the West, across Asia and South America the need and benefit for closer collaboration between governments and companies is evident. In Ecuador and elsewhere the successful transformation of Medellin in Colombia was highlighted as an outcome of closer public-private partnerships in city management and facility operation. In India, discussions on improving healthcare, education, transport and food supply all highlighted the potential available when more efficient execution of government ambitions can be achieved through collaboration with faster moving and more flexible private companies. Citizens, part of a shift towards more participatory government in some regions, will increasingly be more involved in both decision-making and execution. The state may take a step back and instead of leading will become the facilitator of building new relationships with people and industry that can co-create and co-provide solutions to problems.

The need for greater collaboration in the future will drive many companies to re-organise themselves based more on social networks than traditional functional or business unit silos, so changing the structure of collaboration as well as the platforms upon which it operates. This could bring about a divide between meaningful networks based on shared values and emotions and those more superficial connections built purely on data. Within collaboration, time may well become a social currency, and time spent on working on collaborative projects addressing real societal issues could become the metric that drives reputation and social status. Rather than putting in cash, either from a philanthropic standpoint or as a more active investor, we may soon see a shift to individuals proactively seeking to give up their free time to help solve emerging problems, ensuring that the scale of action and impact can be far greater than that achieved when a couple of organisations decide to partner on a traditional joint venture.

Already, collaboration in innovation is increasingly becoming more public and shifting from bilateral partnerships to grand challenges such as X-prizes that focus on problems currently seen to be unsolvable, or that have no clear path toward a solution.

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One timely example of this is the award-winning SunShot initiative run by the US Department of Energy. It focuses on accelerating the point at which solar energy becomes cost-competitive with other forms of electricity by the end of the decade – essentially bring the cost per Watt of solar energy down from \$3.80 to \$1. Rather than funding research within energy companies, the approach has been to first engage the wider public population to generate new concepts that could help achieve the ambition. By then funding the best ideas through cooperative research, development and deployment projects undertaken by a combination of private companies, universities, state and local governments, non-profit organizations and national laboratories, the SunShot approach is to choreograph the ideal collaboration network for each concept. Halfway into the decade long initiative, it has been able to use its resources more intelligently and fund 250 projects that have collectively already achieved 70% of the target cost reduction.

Going forward, big problems are seen to require completely different ways of thinking and cooperating and deeper, wider, more meaningful collaboration is for many an important part of the puzzle.

Collaboration in innovation is increasingly becoming more public.

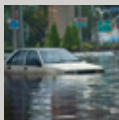
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Air quality



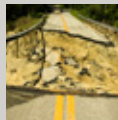
Rising air pollution in many cities is killing people and becomes a visible catalyst for changing mind-sets and policies across health, energy, transportation and urban design.

Flooded cities



The vast majority of our cities are not prepared for flooding. Many districts and households can no longer get flood insurance and are in jeopardy. It's going to get worse before it gets better.

Infrastructure deficit



Infrastructure again becomes a source of competitive advantage. Emerging economies invest in new railroads and highways for more effective movement of people and goods, while developed nations suffer from poor legacy.

Privacy regulation



The push towards global standards, protocols and greater transparency is a focus for many nations driving proactive regulation, but others choose to opt-out of international agreements and go their own way.