



Systems mapping of innovation

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JOHN BESSANT
Managing Innovation

Tool: Systems mapping of innovation

Purpose: To help understand the interconnections between different levels of innovation and the need to assemble complementary innovation assets to work at a systems level. Building a system map helps explore what else is needed – and how vulnerable your innovation might be to changes at a system level.

Background: Innovations are rarely stand-alone component-level changes. Very often they involve the interplay with other elements in some kind of system. This might be a physically interconnected one – like the different components which come together to make a car – or they may be the different complementary elements needed to deliver a service like remote retailing or online streaming. Managing innovation to create value requires paying attention to making sure all the elements are present and co-ordinated so it's useful to build a map to help focus attention on this challenge.

The tool:

Using a [mind-map \(or similar approach\)](#), first position the innovation under study. Then ask questions like:

- What else does this need to make it work?
- What's the wider system to which it belongs?
- What does it contribute to or form part of? Or is it at the centre, around which other components are configured?
- Which are essential components and which optional or 'nice to have'?

There's an example below looking at the idea of building a canal system to improve transportation of goods. Such as system requires extensive innovation in a number of areas, and within them extensive component innovation.

