



# Reflection

## Networks and capacity

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*A theme paper prepared for the project 'Capacity, Change and Performance'*

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# Study of Capacity, Change and Performance

## Notes on the methodology

*The lack of capacity in low-income countries is one of the main constraints to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Even practitioners confess to having only a limited understanding of how capacity actually develops. In 2002, the chair of Govnet, the Network on Governance and Capacity Development of the OECD, asked the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) in Maastricht, the Netherlands to undertake a study of how organisations and systems, mainly in developing countries, have succeeded in building their capacity and improving performance. The resulting study focuses on the endogenous process of capacity development - the process of change from the perspective of those undergoing the change. The study examines the factors that encourage it, how it differs from one context to another, and why efforts to develop capacity have been more successful in some contexts than in others.*

*The study consists of about 20 field cases carried out according to a methodological framework with seven components, as follows:*

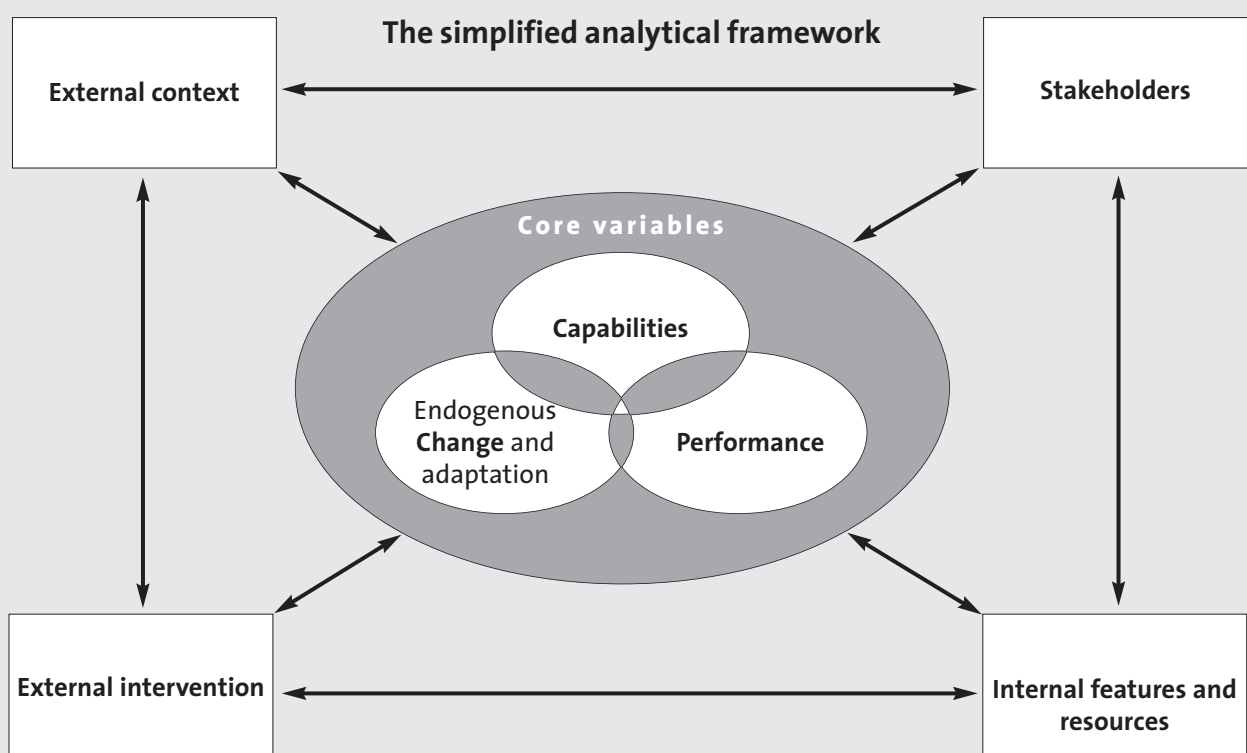
- **Capabilities:** *How do the capabilities of a group, organisation or network feed into organisational capacity?*
- **Endogenous change and adaptation:** *How do processes of change take place within an organisation or system?*
- **Performance:** *What has the organisation or system accomplished or is it now able to deliver? The focus here is on assessing the effectiveness of the process of capacity development rather than on impact, which will be apparent only in the long term.*
- **External context:** *How has the external context - the*

*historical, cultural, political and institutional environment, and the constraints and opportunities they create - influenced the capacity and performance of the organisation or system?*

- **Stakeholders:** *What has been the influence of stakeholders such as beneficiaries, suppliers and supporters, and their different interests, expectations, modes of behaviour, resources, interrelationships and intensity of involvement?*
- **External interventions:** *How have outsiders influenced the process of change?*
- **Internal features and key resources:** *What are the patterns of internal features such as formal and informal roles, structures, resources, culture, strategies and values, and what influence have they had at both the organisational and multi-organisational levels?*

*The outputs of the study will include about 20 case study reports, an annotated review of the literature, a set of assessment tools, and various thematic papers to stimulate new thinking and practices about capacity development. The synthesis report summarising the results of the case studies will be published in 2007.*

*The results of the study, interim reports and an elaborated methodology can be consulted at [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org) or [www.ecdpm.org](http://www.ecdpm.org). For further information, please contact Ms. Anje Jooya ([ahk@ecdpm.org](mailto:ahk@ecdpm.org)).*



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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AI	appreciative inquiry
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
COEP	Comitê de Entidades no Combate à Fome e pela Vida (Committee of Entities in the Struggle against Hunger and for a Full Life, Brazil)
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
GOVNET	Network on Governance and Capacity Development
ICTs	information and communications technologies
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature - World Conservation Union
NGO	non-governmental organisation
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OD	organisational development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAHO	Pan-African Health Organisation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WGNRR	Women's Global Network on Reproductive Rights
WHO	World Health Organisation

# 1 Introduction

Increasingly, we live in a world of networks. This is having a profound impact on the way we organise at local, national and international levels (Church et al., 2002). The growth of networks as an organisational form is widely seen as a response to an increasingly complex and inter-connected world which has spawned an array of arrangements for collaboration among actors with similar or shared interests. The network revolution has been fuelled by rapid advances in information and communications technologies (ICTs) that have opened up new possibilities for information sharing and cooperation.

The impact of these changes has been felt in many domains, including the field of international development where networks have become a significant force, bringing together diverse actors to address a range of development challenges. With this revolution comes the task of developing new ways of thinking and new tools to better understand and deal with the opportunities and challenges associated with networks as an organisational form.

Networks have existed for millennia, bringing together the poor and marginalised, agriculturalists, political groups, academics and researchers, among others. Their existence has served to underpin and strengthen relationships in societies and promote social capital. In contemporary society, networks exist in diverse forms linking individuals and organisations with a shared interest in exchanging ideas, generating knowledge or mobilising capacity for collective action.

Development practitioners have increasingly recognised the value of connecting actors through networks, or other types of collaborative arrangements, as a way

of addressing development issues. This is reflected in the growing literature on development networks and on related themes such as partnerships, programme-based approaches and governing by networks (Goldsmith and Eggers, 2004). What has been much less well explored in the development literature is the link between capacity issues and networks.

Much of the enthusiasm about networks in civil society organisations, governments and international development agencies is rooted in a belief that the capacity of a network is somehow greater than the sum of its parts. The basic assumption is that a network can mobilise or generate capacity and have a greater impact on change processes than could be achieved by individuals or organisations acting alone. The suggestion, in other words, is that in networks 1+1 > 2.

Despite this prevailing enthusiasm about networks, there is a concern that the conceptual frameworks and approaches used to analyse and support capacity development in networks, most of which are drawn from the organisational development literature, are inadequate for understanding and making choices about intervention strategies and for evaluating capacity in networks.

This paper aims to contribute to the conceptual understanding of capacity and capacity development in relation to networks: what distinguishes networks from other organisational forms; what capabilities are needed to make networks work effectively, and how these capabilities develop over time. It also explores some of the implications for addressing capacity issues in networks, including choices of intervention strategies.

This is one of five theme papers prepared under the European Centre for Development Policy Management's (ECDPM) study on Capacity, Change and Performance.<sup>1</sup> A draft of this paper was prepared drawing on the existing literature on networks and capacity development, as well as several case studies of successful network experiences undertaken in the context of the broader ECDPM study. The draft paper was then presented as a discussion document at an ECDPM workshop, co-sponsored by SNV and UNDP, in The Hague in September 2005. The workshop brought together practitioners with a broad range of network experiences in different contexts and with an interest in capacity issues.<sup>2</sup> The authors are indebted to the workshop participants whose insights and feedback contributed to enriching this paper conceptually and in making it relevant to practitioners.

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## Notes

- 1 The ECDPM study was initiated at the behest of the chair of the Network on Governance and Capacity Development (GOVNET) of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). It has received funding from seven international organisations, as well as from several national organisations involved in the 18 field cases carried out as part of the larger study, in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean. The other theme papers address the concept of capacity, systems thinking and its relevance to capacity development, legitimacy and capacity development and monitoring and evaluation of capacity development. These themes emerged from the broader study (mainly from the cases) and were deemed by the research team significant enough to merit deeper consideration - see [www.ecdpm.org/dcc/capacitystudy](http://www.ecdpm.org/dcc/capacitystudy).
- 2 For more information on the workshop, see Zinke (2005).

## 2 What is distinctive about networks as an organisational form?

### 2.1 Networking and networks

There are many definitions of networks in the literature, most of which share certain common characteristics while emphasising particular aspects, e.g. the purpose, form and nature of participation.

#### Box 1: Definitions of networking and networks

- A network can be defined as an association of independent individuals or institutions with a shared purpose or goal, whose members contribute resources and participation in two-way exchanges or communications (Plucknett *et al.*, 1990).
- Networking is the process resulting from our conscious efforts to build relationships with each other ... networks are more or less formal, more or less durable relational patterns that emerge as a result of such efforts. The core business is not the manufacture of products or the provision of services, but social learning, communication and the making of meaning (Engel, 1993).
- Networks are non-hierarchical social systems which constitute the basic social form that permits an inter-organisational coalition to develop (Carley and Christie, 2000).
- Networks are emergent phenomena that occur when organisations or individuals begin to embrace a collaborative process, engage in joint decision making and begin to act as a coherent entity. When this occurs, a network has emerged. These new inter-organisational forms are referred to as coalitions, alliances, strategic alliance networks, consortia and partnerships (Milward and Provan, 2003).

For purposes of this paper, and drawing on the similarities in the definitions above, we adopt a broad definition of networks as:

- groups of individuals and/or organisations
- with a shared concern or interest
- who voluntarily contribute knowledge, experience

- and/or resources for shared learning, joint action and/or to achieve a shared purpose or goal, and
- who rely on the network to support their own objectives.

It should be noted that this paper is not concerned with information technology networks or for-profit collaborative arrangements. Rather, it focuses on social, economic and cultural networks with a public purpose, principally those engaged in or supporting developing country interests.

Networks have been categorised in various ways in the literature, including by:

- *Purpose or motivation*: e.g. to generate knowledge for innovation, scale up for social change and advocacy, and/or partner for service delivery (Liebler and Ferri, 2004).
- *Level(s) of intervention or collaboration*: local community, organisational, inter-organisational, sectoral, national, regional, global or multi-layered 'nested networks' that integrate efforts from local to global (Carley and Christie, 2000).
- *Type(s) of activities*: learning, service provision, advocacy, execution of projects, institutional strengthening (Engel, 1993). (In reality, networks typically engage in a bit of everything.)
- *Structure*: informal, formal, inter-organisational alliances or partnerships. (Most networks combine formal and informal structuring and adapt structuring patterns to respond to evolving internal and external imperatives.)

These categories offer different lenses through which one can begin to navigate the vast and increasingly specialised literature on knowledge and innovation networks, civil society networks, social action networks for sustainable development, policy networks, on global networks ... and the list goes on. This specialised literature allows interested readers to delve more deeply into issues that arise in specific types of networks. Its limitation is that it does not necessarily contribute explicitly to our understanding of networks as an organisational form, or of capacity issues in networks.

Networks vary substantially in terms of their form, complexity, combination of activities, lifespan and dynamics. They emerge and evolve in different forms and function at different levels: local community, organisational, inter-organisational, sector-wide, national, regional, global and multilayered 'nested networks' that integrate efforts from local to global (Carley and Christie, 2000). Yet they share certain characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of human organisation (see Table 1).



**Table 1.** Networks and organisations.

Networks	Organisations
<p>Are constituted through <b>voluntary association</b> of individuals and/or organisations to advance an issue or purpose. Members join, participate in, or leave a network based on their perception of its added value: exchange of knowledge or practices, increased capacity to effect change, etc.</p> <p>The relationship among members is fundamentally a <b>social contract</b>.</p>	<p>Are <b>mandated</b> by a governing body, shareholders or members to achieve organisational goals and objectives.</p> <p>While employees and managers may value the organisation's goals and objectives, the contractual relationship is fundamentally <b>legal and/or financially based</b>.</p>
<p><b>Negotiated order and reciprocal accountability.</b> Members share their ideas and engage in joint action to the extent they trust others will reciprocate. Participation is 'at the core' of what makes a network different from other organisational forms (Church et al., 2002: 21).</p>	<p><b>Hierarchical order and accountability</b> to executives, boards of governors and shareholders, ministers, etc., is a key feature of organisations. Authority for decision making and accountability ultimately rests at the top.</p>
<p><b>Networks are fluid and organic:</b> Networks emerge, grow and adapt to achieve their purpose, to respond to members' needs and to opportunities and challenges in their environment.</p> <p><b>Their trajectories and results are not easily predictable.</b></p>	<p><b>Organisations have codified functions and roles, and routinised practices</b> (job descriptions, policies, rules and procedures, standard operating manuals, strategic and operational plans, etc.), that allow them to <b>deliver products and services with a relatively high level of predictability</b>.</p>
<p><b>Informal structuring of relationships</b> among network members is as important, if not more so than formal structure. It is facilitated through information exchange, creation of common spaces to share knowledge and experience (workshops, conferences, websites), joint project work, etc.</p> <p>Too limited structuring or formalisation of arrangements can limit the potential of a network, while too much structure risks stifling energy and innovation (UNDP, 2000: 28; Church et al., 2002).</p> <p>While networks are self-organising, to a certain extent, most require a coordinator or secretariat, however small, to support them.</p>	<p><b>Formal organisational structuring of work</b> is important in organisations, and much time is devoted to getting the structure right.</p> <p>Mintzberg (1979) suggests that organisations are structured as different configurations of three main components: a strategic apex, core operations and administrative support. These components take on more or less importance and different characteristics depending on whether an organisation is a hierarchy - typical of state institutions and funding agencies - whether it is a professional association, or a structured 'adhocracy' more typical of not-for-profit NGOs.</p>

Two other characteristics distinguish networks as an organisational form:

- They evolve in response to the complex realities in which they operate
- They are better suited than organisations to facilitate innovation because of their diversity, and free-flowing exchange of information and experiences among participants with a shared commitment.

These defining characteristics of networks and organisations provide a basis for exploring the different logic that animates networks. They offer some clues as to why individuals and/or organisations may choose to join a network, for example, to make use of the space

available within a network for exchange of ideas, or to advance issues they could not within existing hierarchical organisations or institutions. They also give some sense of the challenges that may arise in managing the interface between networks and organisations operating with different logics - for example, state bureaucracies and funding agencies - around issues of results-based management, accountability and sustainability.

While laying out these distinctions between networks and organisations can be useful, it carries the risk of fostering perspectives that are a-contextual, a-historical, and disembodied from the actors and realities that give them life. The reality is that some of the most

effective organisations display at least some 'network-like' characteristics (e.g. Cisco Systems<sup>3</sup>), while some formal networks look like organisations with well established management and governance structures, e.g. the Brazilian Observatorio on Human Resources in Health and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The authors also recognise that in a highly networked world there is a risk that every form of collaboration or inter-institutional arrangement may be called a network or partnership, to the point where the term becomes meaningless. Governments, for example, may create or facilitate webs of relationships that have network-like characteristics. However, if the relationships are based on hierarchical control and accountability, and if power and authority remains with government (e.g. contracting groups of service providers), then the definition does not really fit.

In Annex A, we attempt to highlight the diversity of network forms, plotting them along a continuum: from informal networking at one end, to formalised inter-organisational collaborations at the other, with a range of informal-formal structuring patterns in between. In mapping out these forms, we do not assume that networks automatically move along such a continuum over time from informal to more formal. In fact, some networks choose to remain informal because it suits their purpose. Others choose to formalise some elements to better respond to opportunities or challenges and/or changing member needs. Rather, our intent is to draw attention to the range of forms networks can take, and to the potential, as well as the limitations, that each of these forms holds in capacity terms.

## 2.2 Exploring networks and capacity from a complex systems perspective

If the assumption is that capacity in a network is greater than the sum of its parts, then network capacity and performance cannot be understood or fostered simply by making sure that each component does its part. Following Morgan (2006), we adopt a systems perspective in this paper and draw on complexity theory in our analysis of networks and capacity.

Networks are thus conceived in this paper as complex, adaptive systems. As with organisms in a natural ecosystem, networks function as open systems that respond to environmental changes and co-evolve with them in order to survive (Hall, 2002). Their survival depends on their capacity to change, to learn from experience and to adapt to their environment. Evidence suggests that effective and sustainable networks have the potential to self-organise

and to create new structures and new ways of relating and mobilising energy for action, and to combine formal and informal elements to achieve their purpose.

Embracing a systems perspective leads practitioners and analysts to think of networks not simply as designed structures, but as fluid patterns of relationship-based dynamics which evolve in response to variables within the network itself, as well as factors in the broader environment. For example, a network's culture may remain relatively open and flexible, while its structure and governance arrangements become more formalised over time. Rather than looking for linear cause and effect relationships to understand development of capacity in networks, systems theory suggests we look for patterns of behaviour that emerge in response to particular contexts, and internal factors, over time. We explore this further in section 3 of this paper.

Networks are suited to the complex reality in which they operate. The complexity of networks arises from the multiple relationships and interactions amongst different elements of the system. Drawing on insights from studies of living systems - biology, anthropology, sociology, economics, management and information technology - complexity science (Zimmerman *et al.*, 1998) is well suited to explain some of the distinctive properties of networks (e.g. emergence) and some of the paradoxes (e.g. interdependence among actors who can also act independently, collaboration to achieve shared goals and competition of ideas and perspectives to foster learning, innovation and adaptation). Because it is empirically grounded, complexity theory offers practical insights and tools for managing some of the 'messiness' of networks. We draw on these in sections 4 and 5 of this paper.

### 3 Why and how do networks emerge?

*'Formation of networks in society is not new. Hunter gatherers daily survived overwhelming ecological odds through cooperation and leveraging individual efforts through bonds of mutual trust and reciprocity. Small groups everywhere share this ancient and larger than life capability with their Kalahari counterparts' (Stephenson, 2004).*

#### 3.1 Origins of networks

Historically, the poor have formed networks of reciprocity and exchange in response to economic insecurity, lack of social services and marginalisation in the political process (Granovetter, 1983). Midwives, craftsmen and other practitioners have formed networks to share knowledge and experience, to support innovation and to develop their professions or trades. Etienne Wenger (1998) was the first to explore these networks of practitioners and the more modern networks that have since emerged. He called these types of networks 'communities of practice'. According to Wenger, a community of practice defines itself along three dimensions:

- *what it is about*: its joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members;
- *how it functions*: mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity; and
- *what capability it has produced or seeks to develop*: the shared repertoire of communal resources (tools, documents, vocabulary, symbols, etc.) that members develop over time through sharing of practice, and which in some way carry the accumulated knowledge of the community.

Over the years, there has been a proliferation of communities of practice. Some have names, many do not. Some are quite formal, others are very fluid and informal. Some are self-organising, others are institutionally supported. As with their historical antecedents, these communities of practice respond to social and professional interests, connecting practitioners within organisations and across organisational boundaries to exchange knowledge and experiences, to enrich their practice and to address new and emerging challenges. As noted, their development has been propelled by increasingly sophisticat-

ed information technology, which has allowed people to access information and to link with their peers across institutional and geographical boundaries.

In essence, networks introduce a degree of structure to relationships. They have many of the benefits and characteristics of associational life that Putnam (1993) and others have discussed as social capital. They constitute a kind of 'bank account' of relationships nurtured by trust that members can draw upon and that holds the potential for mobilising assets collectively to achieve a common purpose, thus increasing their capacity.

#### 3.2 Why networks emerge: motivations and drivers

Individuals and organisations come together through a network around a common purpose, and if they see a potential for increasing their capacity to achieve that purpose, either through sharing of information or joint action.

Creech and Willard (2001) suggest that some of the key drivers for the emergence of knowledge networks include the following:

- *A sense of urgency*: the growing complexity and inter-relatedness of major social, economic and environmental problems and the failure of narrow approaches to solve issues like HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, poverty alleviation etc. make multi-stakeholder learning unavoidable and necessary.
- *A sense of frustration* by public and academic actors, marginalisation of research endeavours and lack of impact on public policy.
- *Possibilities afforded by information and communications technologies (ICTs)*.

Case studies and examples from the ECDPM study illustrate these points (see box 2).

Civil society actors create or join networks to increase access to information, expertise and financial resources, to increase efficiency, to increase the visibility of issues, develop shared practices, mitigate risks, reduce isolation and increase credibility. Other motivators include: opportunities to share learning, strengthen advocacy capacity, respond more effectively to complex realities, and scale up impact (Liebler and Ferri, 2004; Engel and van Zee, n.d.).

**Box 2: Why networks emerge - examples from the ECDPM study**

The Brazilian *Observatorio on Human Resources in Health* is a formal network of universities, research centers and a federal office that was formed to improve human resources planning, development and management in the health sector. The Observatorio emerged around common issues of concern: the existence of inequitable and unconnected social and health systems at different levels, and the absence of a common human resource system, which was seen as a major constraint to the successful implementation of health reform in Brazil.

The *Growth and Poverty Forum in Ghana* is an informal network that emerged out of a shared frustration among individuals, civil society organisations, the private sector, research institutions and trade unions stemming from their marginalisation from and limited influence on the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) process in their country.

Parthasarathy and Chopde (2000) also underlined the importance of collective action through networks to encourage the uptake of new technologies - e.g. relating to watershed and irrigation management, integrated pest and disease management - in order to overcome problems of limited institutional access to information, credit, etc., as well as seed supply and provision-related problems. For poor people with few assets, networks can play an important role in helping them access or unlock capacity while spreading risks through collective action.

For some, networks are emergent phenomena that form when organisations or individuals embrace a collaborative process, engage in shared learning and joint decision making and, over time, begin to act more as a coherent entity. Loosely coupled networks come together as platforms for action as people and groups seek to give one another moral support, increase their expertise or achieve greater influence through voluntary association. Civil society organisations use such networks to create new alliances, policy spaces and means of negotiating with state and international institutions.

Across the globe, networks are increasingly forming in sectors where actors recognise their interdependence and where collective capabilities are needed to address increasingly complex issues, e.g. environmental and natural resource management, disease pandemics, economic development, trade agreements, protocols for information technology, and others. The realisation that many development challenges are not just local in nature, but regional and global as well, and the possibilities afforded by information technology have also contributed to the emergence of regional and global policy and action networks.<sup>4</sup>

**Box 3: Examples of sector policy and action networks**

- *The Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate* works to improve capacity in water resources management and to deal with variability of the world's climate, by establishing a forum where policy makers and water resources managers have better access to and use of information generated by climatologists and meteorologists.
- *The Ethical Trading Initiative and the Fair Labor Association* is an alliance of companies and NGOs that have joined forces to promote adherence to international labour standards.
- *The World Commission on Dams* was jointly initiated by opponents and advocates of large dams to review the effectiveness of dam construction and to explore alternatives to manage water resources.

Attracted by the potential of such networks to address complex development challenges, international funding agencies have begun to invest significant amounts of resources to bring together diverse stakeholders interested in common issues who agree to work together to address them.

Driven by a need to access specialised expertise and to increase flexibility to deliver a range of services to the public, governments are also creating network-like partnership arrangements with organisations from the private sector and civil society in sectors such as parks and forest management, law enforcement, and disease control and prevention (Goldsmith and Eggers, 2004).

**Notes**

- 4 While these examples are all taken from the literature on global networks, note that none are actually called networks; rather, they are referred to as programmes, initiatives, associations, and even a Commission. Only a closer, in-depth examination of how these arrangements actually work would allow us to determine the extent to which they actually function as networks.

**Box 4: The Roll Back Malaria Initiative**

The Roll Back Malaria Initiative was launched jointly by the WHO, the World Bank, UNICEF and UNDP in November 1998. It involves international organisations, bilateral development agencies, businesses, NGOs and the media. It seeks to reduce mortality resulting from malaria by 50% by 2010 and by 75% by 2015. It relies on a central team of 8-10 staff members to coordinate activities, and in 2000 had a budget of \$25 million.

**3.3 How networks emerge: A dynamic interplay of factors**

The case examples reviewed for this paper revealed that each network emerged through a convergence of factors and conditions that catalysed the energies of actors to engage with each other to achieve a purpose, in a given context at a certain point in time. While each network's story is unique, experience suggests that the emergence of networks can be influenced (either enabled or constrained) by a variety of factors. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Challenges and opportunities in the environment:* e.g. a complex social problem, opening up political space.
- *Individuals and/or organisations with some expertise, skills and/or resources.* The emergence of many networks can be traced to the motivations and efforts of a core group of people who have developed relationships and trust through networking, information exchange and joint action - and thus had some pre-existing social capital on which they could build.
- *Leadership* with vision, credibility and legitimacy to convene and mobilise actors to collaborate in pursuit of that vision.
- *External interventions* that galvanise (or entice) the creation of a network, e.g. exposure to new ideas, knowledge and expertise (through access to information, academics and consultants; inter-institutional, regional and international linkages); the creation of space for dialogue and facilitation of exchange of ideas among otherwise isolated individuals and organisations (through conferences and workshops); and seed funding.

The richness and complex interaction of factors that lead to the emergence of a network can only truly be appreciated through in-depth exploration of cases. It is nevertheless possible to observe some general patterns in how networks emerge.

In Latin America, for example, many networks have their origins in the social movements of the 1960s (Ranaboldo and Pinzas, 2003). In Brazil, the fight against dictatorship led to a movement in favour of democratic, participatory and decentralised structures. Initially grounded in solidarity networks of intellectuals and practitioners committed to social justice and development, these groups evolved as broader networks of actors linking government, NGOs and public enterprises. In the process, they have enhanced the capacity of Brazilian society to address complex development issues, increasingly focusing on subject specialisation. The emergence of these networks in Brazil was galvanised by leaders with vision, legitimacy and credibility (de Campos and Hauck, 2005).

The circumstances that led to the emergence of the African networks reviewed for this paper were different from those in Brazil. For example, policy research networks in Sub-Saharan Africa have been described as products of the institutional crises of the 1980s which affected African public sectors (Prewitt, 1998). They emerged as compensatory mechanisms to build competencies across otherwise debilitated institutions and to contribute to a critical mass in key research areas. In other words, it was the weakness of existing institutional capacity that motivated the establishment of the networks, rather than the propitious opening of political space, or the otherwise more favourable environment that contributed to the emergence of the Brazilian networks described above.

External interventions have played a role, at times quite significant, in the emergence of networks in developing countries. Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), for example, has played a major role in convening, facilitating and funding the creation of hundreds of policy research networks in the developing world, particularly in Africa. On a more modest scale, but also significantly, a consultant with the Pan-African Health Organisation (PAHO) was instrumental in supporting

the nascent interest of Brazilian public health professionals in the creation of the Observatorio.

While acknowledging that external interventions, particularly financing of networks through international public funds, have played an important role in the emergence of Africa's professional networks, Prewitt (1997) nevertheless argues that 'the impetus for creating them was not the result of direct donor interest. Rather there was usually a base of similar activities around which a network could be formed, allowing members to achieve a shared purpose: to provide mutual support in generating knowledge to better address critical problems of Africa' (p.13)

This suggests that network emergence is driven by individuals or groups motivated to address opportunities or challenges in their environment, and who recognise the potential for increasing their capacity beyond what they could achieve on their own through the creation of or joining a network. The capabilities that make networks work effectively to fulfil that promise are addressed in the next section.

## 4 Capacity and capabilities: what makes networks effective?

To the extent that the issues of capacity and networks are addressed together in the development literature, it is usually from the perspective of how networks develop, or contribute to, the capacity of their members. While this is clearly important, less consideration has been given to what is distinct or different about the capacity of networks (compared with other organisational forms) or what capabilities are required to make networks function effectively.

### 4.1 Capabilities and capacity to perform

In an interim report on the study on Capacity, Change and Performance, Morgan et al. (2005) attempted to unbundle the concept of capacity. They refer to capacity as an overall, aggregate outcome of a series of conditions, intangible assets and relationships that are part of an organisation or system, and that are distributed at various levels:

- Individuals have personal abilities and attributes or *competencies* that contribute to the performance of the system.
- Organisations and broader systems have a broad range of collective attributes, skills, abilities and expertise called *capabilities* which can be both 'technical' (e.g. policy analysis, marine resource assessment, financial resource management) and 'social-relational' (e.g. mobilising and engaging actors to collaborate towards a shared purpose across organisational boundaries, creating collective meaning and identity, managing the tensions between collaboration and competition).
- *Capacity* refers to the overall ability of a system to perform and sustain itself.

In a more recent paper, Morgan (2006) argues that capacity to perform is *both* about achieving substantive development outcomes *and* about empowerment and identity, people acting together, developing collective ability to act, to adapt in context, and to create something of public value. For members of a network, performance is gauged mainly in terms of:

- *efficiency*: e.g. speed of access to information and experiences, and
- *effectiveness*: capacity to contribute to positive change in their own institution/ community and collectively at a higher level.

#### 4.2 Capabilities that make networks work

In this section we look specifically at network capabilities - what capabilities make networks perform and sustain themselves - and how practitioners can recognise these capabilities, support their development and ensure the added value that network members seek.

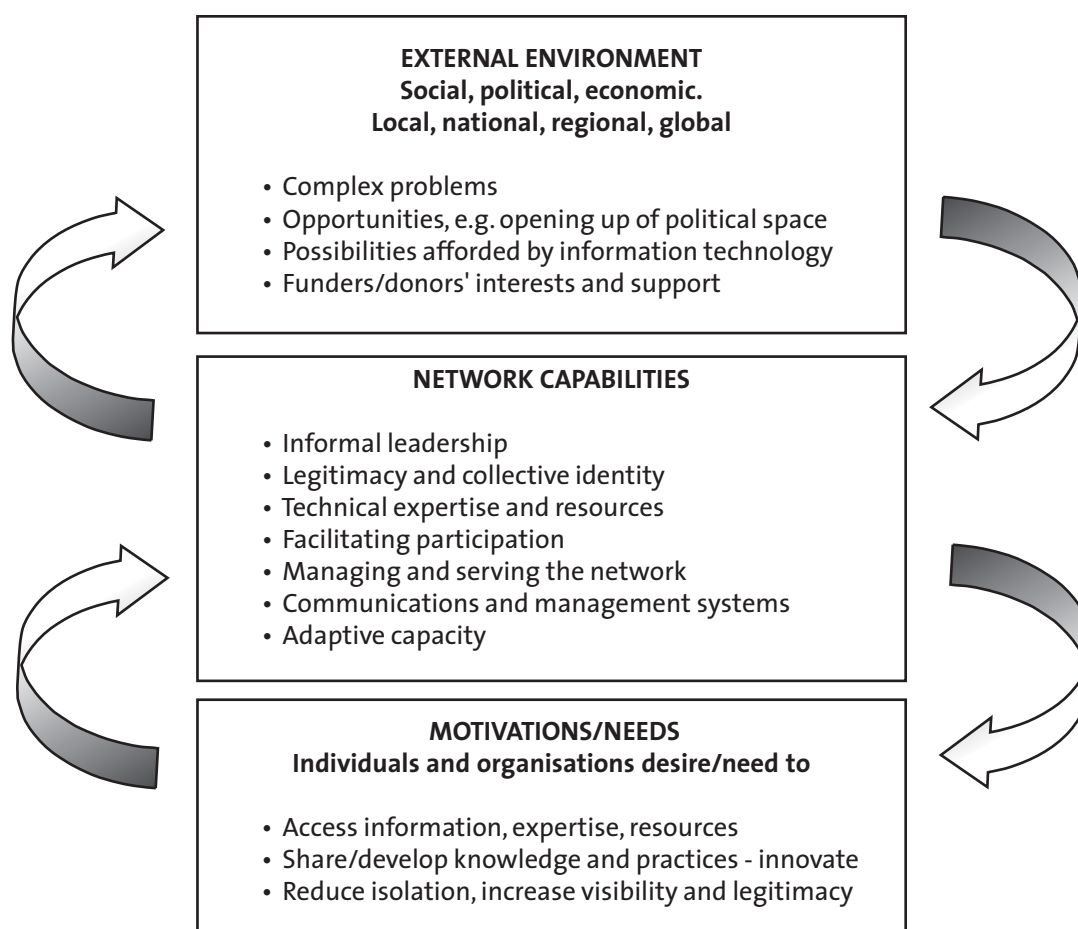
Our inquiry is grounded in the ECDPM case studies, examples provided by practitioners at the workshop in the Hague, as well analyses by IDRC (Bernard, 1996; Yeo, 2004) and UNDP (2000) on policy research and advocacy networks. Our initial analysis drew on a framework adapted from Liebler and Ferri (2004),

which identified 21 capabilities in NGO networks categorised in four areas: external, internal, technical and generative or 'soft' capabilities.

For the purposes of this paper, we have chosen to focus on a more limited set of capabilities (collective attributes, skills, abilities and expertise; see below) that vibrant, effective networks tend to have. Our intent is not to provide an exhaustive list of capabilities that are necessary in every network at every stage of their development, but rather to identify capability areas that practitioners can explore when supporting, establishing or managing a network. In so doing, we attempt to illustrate each capability area with some practical examples.

Capabilities are not discussed in this section in any order of importance. In fact, the picture that emerges from our review of cases suggests that a combination of attributes, skills, abilities and expertise may

**Figure 1:** Dynamic interplay between network capabilities, context and motivations/drivers in networks.



be needed for any given network, depending on the context, the purpose of the network and a host of other factors.

Figure 1 graphically depicts the dynamic interplay between challenges and opportunities in the environment, motivations/drivers that contribute to network emergence and the kinds of capabilities that are required to make networks work. Not all networks require all these capabilities all of the time. Some may be more important than others, depending on the purpose of the network, the levels of intervention, the complexity of network operations, imperatives linked to legitimacy and efficiency, and the stage in the network's life cycle. The arrows suggest mutual influence and adaptation between network capabilities, the needs of members, and the environment over time.

### Informal leadership

The cases studied, and the literature, emphasise the importance of informal leadership within networks, and in particular the following leadership capabilities:

- Articulating a vision and persuading individuals and organisations to work together to pursue particular ideas or new directions;
- Strategic thinking (Mintzberg, 1998), constantly scanning the environment to identify opportunities and potential space for action. This is often facilitated by existing webs of personal and professional relationships;
- Tapping into people's knowledge, experience and commitment, and connecting them with a higher purpose that motivates them;
- Finding ways to harness the knowledge and experience of actors by facilitating conversations, creating a common language and shared agreements;
- Identifying priorities that are acceptable and realistic;
- Managing relationships, listening to diverse points of view, facilitating dialogue and building consensus;
- Empowering others to act and nurturing leaders throughout the network;
- Managing tensions that are inherent in complex systems, e.g. fostering cooperation for sharing of ideas and practices and for joint action, while ensuring that there is sufficient space for divergent views to be expressed. This is essential for continuous innovation in the network; and

- Mobilising, leveraging and managing human, material and financial resources to support network activity.

Participants in the workshop in The Hague also highlighted the importance of leadership that is active and committed, gives space to others, is '*a leader of the cause*' the networks stands for, makes connections and facilitates relationships, and makes good use of resources in the network. While many of these capabilities would also be required to lead complex civil society or business organisations, the informal and fluid nature of networks is such that leadership must be both comfortable with complexity and uncertainty, and capable of dealing effectively with informal power, relationships and processes.

Networks are not easy to lead. The particular leadership capabilities necessary will depend, among other things, on the network's purpose and functions. A review of lessons learned from almost a decade's experience supporting national and regional HIV/AIDS networks (UNDP, 2000) noted that:

- Having strong capabilities to convene and facilitate, and some technical knowledge, is important for leadership in knowledge networks.
- Advocacy networks require leaders that are particularly skilled at articulating issues, generating consensus and mobilising constituencies.
- Networks undertaking specific tasks, e.g. providing information, or offering counselling services for people who have been tested for HIV, can be even more complex to lead and manage. Leaders must be able to provide enough direction to keep members on track and moving, while maintaining enough flexibility to let members use their expertise and to build the relationships in ways they feel appropriate.

Networks with ambitious goals that bring together actors from different domains (private sector, government agencies/institutions and civil society), from different functional areas (e.g. researchers and policy makers) or from different technical backgrounds (e.g. sociologists, engineers and natural scientists) - such as the Brazilian network COEP and policy and action networks (see section 3.2) - can be even more complex to lead and require most of the leadership capabilities listed above.

The networks reviewed for this study consistently relied on a core group of leaders with complementa-



ry skills. Leadership roles were assumed by key actors in a secretariat, in task groups and/or in local networks that were part of a larger network of networks. In this sense, leadership in networks draws both on the competencies of individuals who assume leadership roles and on the collective capability for distributed leadership in the network.

#### **Box 5: Informal and shared leadership in networks**

Bethinho's personal charisma and imagination may have been the motivating force for the emergence and development of COEP, but he did not work alone. He had operational capacity in the person of André Spitz, a senior manager with Furnas (the Brazilian electricity utility). Furthermore, since 1993, COEP has benefited from its non-hierarchical, participatory style, retaining imaginative leadership at the national level and nurturing creative leaders among its state networks (Saxby, 2004).

One of the responsibilities of a network leader is to think about the long-term, including how to ensure capabilities are in place for effective engagement in the years to come. In the case of the Brazilian *Observatorio*, its leaders talked about the importance of 'four generations of public health specialists and leaders', while also being mindful of the institutional arrangements required to support those individuals and, ultimately, to sustain the network.

#### **Legitimacy and collective identity**

Effective networks are good at connecting individuals across organisational, sectoral and jurisdictional boundaries, and creating a legitimate 'third space' for knowledge sharing, innovation and development of joint practice. They are also good at fostering a collective sense of identify among members.

The legitimacy of a network is not something that can be declared, rather it must be earned. Networks that meet stakeholder expectations for effectiveness and efficiency are generally seen as legitimate (Brinkerhoff, 2005). Networks bring together a range of actors with different expectations. They must also meet expectations of institutions whose support they need or whom they want to influence. The chal-

lenge is to figure out how to sustain legitimacy among the diverse set of stakeholders, while striving to realise the network's shared objectives.

The ability to earn legitimacy and to forge a collective identity is linked to a number of factors, including the quality of network leadership, the credibility and profile of the members, and the extent to which a network's vision is seen as compelling. Legitimacy is also associated with a network's ability to respond to constituent and collective network interests, to bring together diverse capabilities, as well as to maintain its track record in realising results. Legitimacy earned over time enhances the network's capacity to bridge stakeholders, e.g. civil society-government-private sector, and to exercise influence.

The COEP case demonstrates how legitimacy and reputation in public advocacy contributed to the network's overall capacity and performance. Personal legitimacy, embodied in the network's founder and leaders, was critical. As COEP's advocacy efforts generated results for members, the network increased its legitimacy and was better able to serve the needs and interests of its stakeholders and constituents. IUCN, for its part, draws much of its authority and legitimacy from its membership, which numbers well over 1000 institutions and includes a great number of highly qualified and committed scientists and environmentalists.

Networks protect their operating space and legitimise their activities by various means, including:

- *Cultivating a collective identity as a community of practice* - giving members legitimacy to foster new ideas in their own organisations or jurisdiction, and to collectively advocate at other levels (national, regional, global). For example, the Growth and Poverty Forum in Ghana was initially formed as a loose association of civil society organisations with individual but no collective legitimacy to speak on behalf of civil society. Developing a collective identity and adopting a recognisable name - the Growth and Poverty Forum - increased the network's legitimacy to secure a seat at the table with policy makers.
- *Carefully avoiding partisan political positions* - maintaining autonomy, legitimacy and acceptance by different political actors, and protecting the network from shifting political winds or from capture by narrow interests.

- *Maintaining a close connection to members and their realities* - as a network grows, adopting a decentralised structure is one way to maintain its legitimacy as an entity that is grounded in its members' reality and thus able to meet their needs and to represent them with external stakeholders.

### Technical expertise and resources

One of the distinctive features of networks is their potential to draw on knowledge and expertise from diverse sources - a critical factor for network innovation. The examples reviewed in the literature, and both of ECDPM's case studies from Brazil, affirm the importance of technical expertise in enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of a network.

Access to technical knowledge and expertise is an important attractor for members, and is a condition for network legitimacy. For example, global networks addressing issues such as water management or HIV/AIDS are considered relevant and are valued to the extent that they bring together diverse people with a high level of knowledge and experience in their respective fields. These networks not only combine existing knowledge from different sources and backgrounds, but also create new knowledge as consensus emerges, often over contentious issues.

Leaders of vibrant networks are good at tapping into people's technical expertise and sense of professionalism and connecting them with a higher purpose that motivates them. They offer possibilities for individuals to use their knowledge outside their own organisation/ institution, to create new knowledge and 'spark' energy for change that potentially can be mainstreamed. As illustrated in various cases, this can lead to the network having capacity that is, in fact, greater than the sum of its constituent parts (i.e.  $1+1 > 2$ ). This higher level of aggregated capacity can be an important attractor for individuals or organisations who recognise the potential for enhancing their own capacity and/or impact through collaboration.

#### Box 6: Tapping into technical expertise

COEP invited entities to use their organisational and technical competences to support a social movement. The network simply asked them to do what they knew, but to do it differently, for different people, and to work with and for poor and marginalised communities (Saxby, 2004).

Effective networks do not merely aggregate resources but are structured to take advantage of and to leverage the capabilities and resources that different actors bring to the network. Beyond mobilising technical expertise, networks need to be able to mobilise and leverage financial and organisational resources in order to encourage new ideas and coordination, and to support weaker members who rely on the network for project funds.

#### Box 7: Mobilising resources

'Intangibles like leadership, creativity, confidence and legitimacy give COEP its energy, and attract new participants, yet it can only do what it does because institutional members make sizeable financial contributions, and donate an even larger pool of in-kind resources. ... COEP harnessed substantial resources of the parastatals in the campaign against poverty - both financial to support the operating budget of the secretariat and in-kind. Furnas absorbed COEP's secretariat functions, committing the time of a senior manager to that role. Members emphasised the importance of Furnas' initiative, which encouraged others to join' (Saxby, 2004: 3).

While some networks are able to mobilise technical, financial and organisational resources from their members and institutional supporters, many networks whose purpose is to foster long-term institutional and social change may not be able to sustain their activities or grow without external financial support.

Based on a review of evaluations of HIV/AIDS networks, Bernard concluded that networks need their own resources, over and above what is available to each network member. She noted that networks in Uganda and Kenya were 'running on little more than the voluntary energies of a few core staff and that it was unrealistic to think that this is enough to do much more than keep the issues on the policy table. ... The Uganda network was better resourced than the Kenya network, one factor that made it possible to achieve positive results (another factor was a more enabling environment)' (quoted in UNDP, 2000: 29).

Bernard does not argue that external donors must provide resources forever. She does however argue that the capability to secure resources is an important issue for realistic discussion in any attempt to establish and sustain a network or networking activities.

### Facilitating participation

Having the capability to facilitate participation is of paramount importance, particularly given the voluntary nature of networks. The voluntary dimension of networks also creates expectations on the part of those who join, which have to be managed. These include expectations with respect to:

- *Who* participates in making decisions. Vibrant networks engage their members in setting the agenda for the network and in making decisions that affect them. Depending on the network's history, culture, context, size and stage in the life cycle, there may be different imperatives or expectations about who participates in making what kinds of decisions and the nature of that participation on the spectrum of inform-include-involve.
- *How* they participate. Effective networks are deliberately designed as non-hierarchical structures to promote ownership, participation and creativity at local levels. Partnership agreements in which members commit to taking responsibility for working together on a project, or as part of a task force, or to support each other (in solidarity networks, for example) are among the many mechanisms that networks use to build a sense of collective identity, ownership and mutual accountability. Some large national networks ensure broad-based participation through decentralised governance arrangements. Others establish advisory groups on specific issues, or programmes to integrate diverse views.
- *Why* they participate. Members may have a variety of motivations for joining, and different levels of commitment to the network. Effective network leaders and managers are good at articulating a compelling vision, facilitating dialogue, forging shared agreement on priorities and operating principles, meeting the diverse needs of members, and ensuring that members benefit sufficiently from their engagement to ensure their continued involvement.
- *How long they participate*. Network membership is fluid. Members will usually contribute as long as they remain committed to the network's purpose and see their engagement as adding value, or hav-

ing the potential to meet their needs and those of their institution. Effective network leaders need to invest as much, if not more time in managing or facilitating relationships to sustain participation as they do in managing tasks.

In a review of IDRC-sponsored policy research networks, Barnard (1996) found that networks considered effective were those in which members felt that doing things together added value to what they would otherwise have done individually. It also noted the importance of network processes and cultivating a network culture: 'The process of networking is important, including the development of a network culture in which members come to realise an awareness of themselves as part of a group, sharing a common purpose and mutual rights and responsibilities. Expressed another way, the issue is one of establishing shared ownership... Insofar as networks are able to foster active member participation, members feel they are working within a network, not for it - they own it, benefit from it, and are thus more prepared to contribute to it over the long term' (p.15).

Effective networks thus attend to both the tasks to be done and the social relations to be fostered. They facilitate the engagement of members with a variety of expectations, perspectives and experiences in dialogue, decision making and shared activities. Differences among stakeholders can lead to conflict, potentially undermining trust and willingness to exchange information and collaborate. If handled well, however, those differences can be explored and negotiated through joint activities, which can build trust and open up the potential for new learning, accommodation of new ideas and adoption of new practices.

### Managing and serving the network

Relatively small, informal networks can operate and be quite effective for a period of time with the support of a relatively small number of individuals who donate their time or whose time is contributed in-kind by their institution on a continuous or rotational basis. As networks grow, however, they often reach the limits of capacity they can mobilise through voluntary action and require a dedicated secretariat, however small, with some staff and an operating budget to support an increased volume of meetings and electronic interactions, to advise on and monitor projects supported by the members, to administer seed money, or to document and share collective knowledge and experiences.

According to Kabraji (2006), CEO of IUCN Asia Region, the growth and development of a network requires flexible, internal management that operates with a certain mindset and set of capabilities, including:

- a mindset focused on serving the network;
- capability to manage diversity to best advantage and to cultivate collective identity;
- facilitators with strong sets of common values and principles;
- an entrepreneurial approach;
- a focus on results, but strong process management;
- technical expertise with capability for on-the-job coaching;
- management systems for accountability and transparency; and
- knowledge management systems.

Effective network secretariats focus, first and foremost, on serving network members. They earn and maintain the commitment of members by ensuring that the network responds to explicit needs, not constructed ones. Following from that, they determine the configuration of resources and capabilities required to meet those needs. They facilitate connections and encourage activity among members of the network and with external actors, provide technical advice and coaching, and constantly scan the environment for opportunities to advance the network's purpose and benefit its members.

#### Box 8: The network secretariat

The continuous presence of a local expert on the topic of human resources in health, and of a secretariat member sensitive to and knowledgeable about developments in the sector, played a key role in carrying the Observatorio idea forward (de Campos and Hauck, 2005).

The secretariat works with members to frame network priorities, and then mobilises the knowledge, experience and resources (internal and external) to address identified priorities. Successful networks also have the capability to add value by supporting internal learning processes that can help to refine goals and priorities.

While hierarchical organisations tend to achieve their strategic and operational goals by developing strategic plans and standard operating procedures, network managers seek to achieve some measure of strategic alignment on broadly defined goals, while leaving room for flexibility to operationalise implementation in the different institutional contexts of its members by:

- *Framing goals and priorities* in a manner that provides a reasonable and shared basis for members and external actors to support and contribute to the network's programme.
- *Fostering a shared point of view on the 'big' strategic questions* through joint analysis and dialogue, leading to agreement on a general sense of direction towards those goals, versus a detailed plan.
- *Shared agreements on norms, values and operating principles*. Operating principles, or 'minimum specifications',<sup>5</sup> act as bottom-line safeguards, i.e. boundaries within which members agree to work while also allowing for autonomy, diversity of approaches and flexibility in how things are done at the local level to suit local conditions.
- As networks develop and grow, strategic alignment can also be achieved through *structures of governance* (steering committees, advisory committees, etc.) to provide an overall sense of direction, to make decisions and to ensure monitoring and compliance with the network's operating principles. In large decentralised networks (e.g. COEP) alignment can be achieved through the establishment of similar governance mechanisms and operating principles at both national and local levels.

#### Communications and knowledge management systems

Effective networks usually have significant capability to use ICTs to facilitate rapid and broad-based interaction among members and with key stakeholders. Examples from large, decentralised networks in big countries such as Brazil suggest that an electronic communications infrastructure, especially the internet, has been very important for network growth

#### Notes

- 5 The basic idea behind 'minimum specifications' is that complex adaptive systems establish only those requirements necessary to define it, leaving everything else open to the creative evolution of the system. Some of the design principles of minimum specifications include: don't attempt to define the outcome of the behaviour of the system in detail; provide local rules that can be applied by individual agents, or individual cases; have only a few such rules; and allow complex behaviour to emerge from the bottom up in the system through interaction among agents, or between agents and the context. A practical approach to establishing minimum specifications would be to begin with a 'good enough vision' of the desired outcome, and then list the rules that can reasonably be expected to lead to that outcome (see Zimmerman, 1998: 161-162).

and development. ICTs are also essential for the effective functioning of regional and global networks.

Listservers and electronic forums may provide virtual spaces for the rapid exchange of information and experiences, and support ongoing interactions within the network, but they are not a substitute for face-to-face interaction and relationship building. A study of 34 networks within Canadian community colleges (Brennan, 2002) found that to move from information exchange to joint action requires at least some face-to-face meetings. According to the 134 network leaders surveyed, well run face-to-face meetings help to build trust and mutual understanding, offer greater opportunities for exchange of ideas, are essential to develop shared agreements on values and goals, and help to develop a sense of being part of a greater movement. Furthermore, such meetings increase motivation to use listserves after the meetings to keep the dialogue going and to keep in touch. Thus, vibrant networks are able to combine effective planning and facilitation support for meetings with interactive and user-friendly ICTs to sustain engagement beyond meetings.

Effective networks invest in knowledge management systems - databases of information, e.g. membership profiles, print and audiovisual resources documenting collective knowledge and the results of network activities. Networks whose purpose and scale requires funding, e.g. for joint project work, seeding innovation, or operational capacity of a secretariat, require good financial management systems to be effective, to meet accountability requirements of their funders, and to ensure transparency within the network.

### **Adaptive capacity**

Networks need strong analytical and adaptive capabilities to keep them alive in the face of changing contextual realities. Adaptive capacity is the capacity to strategically adjust thinking and actions in response to changing circumstances based on improved knowledge and understanding (Sorgenfrei and Wrigley, 2005).

Vibrant networks demonstrate a keen ability to recognise threats and opportunities in the external environment. They invest in communication channels, and rely on informal exchanges, to gather intelligence from a range of sources and establish spaces for sharing and processing it. They also have the capability to 'reinvent their working forms' in

### **Box 9: Adaptive capacity in networks**

As informal leadership in COEP became over extended and could no longer keep up with network demands, members decided to establish and fund a secretariat. Over time, and with the growth of the network, leaders decided to move towards a decentralised network of networks structure.

The Observatorio in Brazil is a formal network of professional institutions. It obtained legal status and is seeking to comply with accountability, transparency, procedural and international management standards - doing away with the informalities and personalised relationships that contributed to the network's early vitality and success. Formalising the network, its structure and (strategic and operational planning) processes is an adaptation which reflects the stage Observatorio is currently at in its life cycle.

response to shifts in the environment or the evolving aspirations of their membership. The ECDPM cases, and examples provided by participants in the workshop in The Hague, illustrate the point, as shown in box 9.

As the examples above illustrate, effective networks have the capability to adapt, including to self-organise, create new structures and establish ways of relating and mobilising energy for action, as well as to evolve formal and informal elements to achieve their purpose.

While some of the examples in this paper and in Annex A may seem to suggest a linear progression from informal to formal structures, the evolution and growth of networks do not necessarily follow such a path, nor should they. However, in their enthusiasm to tap into and strengthen capabilities of networks, external intervenors too often push them into formalising. This can end up stifling or killing the 'sparks and energy' that come from the exchange of ideas and knowledge in a more informal community of shared interests.

Network leaders and members often face difficult choices as they consider the trade-offs between the potential for capabilities to be gained, for example,

through formalising of structures, and the potential for loss of ownership and flexibility that members value. They also know that a minimum of stability (leadership, staff and financial resources) is needed for networks to consolidate and grow. Trust gained through effective management of relationships gives leaders credibility to engage members in productive dialogue to make the best choices for the network to achieve its purpose and to sustain its energy at any given point in time in its development.

### 4.3 Combinations of capabilities

The ECDPM case studies, and others in the literature, suggest that a combination of capabilities is usually needed for networks to be effective, i.e. for members to continue to be motivated to contribute to the network over time, and for networks to be capable of responding meaningfully to an evolving context.

Capacity cannot be neatly categorised as a response to needs or as a product of network capabilities. While some capabilities are necessary for an effective network under some circumstances, the fluid and organic nature of networks is such that there is both a technique and an art to developing capacity in networks. The Brazilian director of COEP describes, in an evocative metaphor, the combination of ingredients and the somewhat 'intangible' capabilities that make for an effective network (see box 10).

#### Box 10: Developing a vibrant, effective network: Like making a gourmet soup

Key ingredients include:

- A cook or gourmet who can describe a delicious soup: A compelling, attractive idea or vision communicated by someone with credibility and legitimacy.
- Hungry people who want to eat a gourmet soup or to learn how to cook: A common purpose and motivating driving force.
- Multiple ingredients: Variety and diversity of perspectives.
- Coordination of efforts: Operating principles for people to work together.
- Enough ingredients and a sufficiently big pot to satisfy the number of guests and their appetites: Size and resources consistent with the number of members and their needs.
- Fire under the pot: Leadership effectively seizing opportunities in the environment.
- Patience and time to find the right ingredients, to prepare them, to allow for the soup to simmer....

With more fire under the pot, stirring and additional seasoning by the chef, a stronger taste develops and a higher level of energy is created. The soup begins to boil: some bubbles appear then disappear, while the rest of the soup may appear as though it is dormant for a while. Lowering the heat allows the soup to simmer and to integrate the ingredients. Increasing the fire under the pot too dramatically can result in the soup burning. Just as in gourmet cooking, developing effective networks requires both technique and art.

## 5 Implications for practice: mindsets and approaches

As the preceding sections suggest, working with networks requires:

- *a shift in mindset* - including adopting a systems perspective, a willingness and ability to look for synergies, openness to shared responsibility and accountability, and relinquishing a certain degree of control; and
- *a shift in approach* - avoiding blueprint strategies, moving to long-term perspectives on change, and relying on more qualitative approaches, such as for assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

At the ECDPM-SNV-UNDP workshop on networks and capacity, the participants underlined the need to think differently about capacity issues when dealing with networks, as compared to other organisational forms. Network characteristics that, in their view, necessitate this include the following:

- *The complexity of networks.* By their very nature, networks involve management of complex relationships among independent actors. Managing this complexity requires a shift in perspective from individuals and organisations to relationships among actors, and to their interdependence within the context of change. Working with networks requires time to: (a) understand the history of linkages and relationships; (b) develop trust among actors, and develop shared agreements to collaborate and achieve shared goals; (c) nurture relationships while mobilising for joint action; and (d) adjust and adapt the structure while clearly pursuing a purpose and ensuring added value to members.
- *The diversity of networks.* Networks vary significantly in terms of their purpose, substantive orientation, membership, size, scope, how they make decisions and govern themselves, their resource base, etc., all of which have consequences for addressing capacity issues. Along the informal-formal continuum of network forms, there are *different 'contractual logics'* variously described as 'social contracts', 'contracts relating to membership', and the more formal 'contractual

agreements' (e.g. with funding agencies). Each of these has implications for how networks operate and what capabilities they require.

- *Volunteerism and commitment.* The fact that networks are voluntary associations of individuals and organisations means that they must be able to mobilise committed talent and respond to members' needs on an ongoing basis, or risk losing them. Members who contribute their time, knowledge and skills expect to be included and involved in decision making. They also expect that participating in the network will add value in capacity terms (their own capacity and the collective capacity to effect change at a higher level).
- *The fluidity and life cycles of networks.* Vibrant networks need to be able to adapt their structures, membership and ways of operating over time to achieve their purpose. Even within a given period or stage of development, different parts of a network, or networks within a larger network, may have more or less capacity than others (some 'bubble' with energy, while others are dormant). This has implications for assessing overall network capacity and for the design of supportive interventions.
- *Informal structuring and power.* Network managers, supportive consultants and donors need to be able to recognise, mobilise and nurture power and capabilities of informal leaders and experienced members throughout the network.

### 5.1 Implications for practitioners

The points highlighted above reflect a need to think beyond the design features of individual organisations and organisational development (OD) intervention repertoires, to models based more on complex, fluid and adaptive systems. They also suggest that strengthening the capacity of networks requires development of:

- A different kind of leadership - distributed, informal, facilitative leadership, capable of nurturing relationships and dealing with complexity.
- Capability to rapidly access technical knowledge and experience from diverse sources, across institutional and geographical boundaries - and to facilitate exchanges of knowledge and experiences for innovation.
- Capability to mobilise, leverage and manage technical, organisational and financial contributions from members, as well as from external supporters.
- Participatory decision-making processes, essential to maintain volunteer engagement and

contributions from members.

- Structures that are appropriate for the level of capacity required to deliver added value.
- Communications, information and knowledge management systems are critical and challenging, given the diffusion and multiplicity of network sites and organisations. Fundraising, financial management, monitoring and evaluation and learning systems and mechanisms are also critical for attracting and accounting for resources necessary for the functioning and sustainability of networks.
- Capability to capture, articulate and disseminate network results (as added value to members and external constituencies).

The literature and cases are clear on several practical implications for network managers and external consultants:

- Clarify network purpose and goals, and ensure shared agreements.
- Look for where there is energy in the system - utilise and mobilise existing capacity.
- Rely on and work with committed professionals and informal leaders.
- Adopt a facilitative approach - build relationships and accompany the process.
- Create spaces for dialogue, for exchange of experiences and for joint activity.
- Accompany<sup>6</sup> the network - build on existing capabilities and support development of others.

Church et al. (2002) argue that network managers, consultants and other practitioners should embrace qualitative and participatory approaches to capacity assessment, monitoring and evaluation that are practical and serve members' needs, and contribute to learning, sharing of experiences and ultimately improvements in practice.

A number of tools and approaches are particularly suited to supporting capacity utilisation and development of capacity in networks. These include:

- *Social actor mapping*<sup>7</sup> is an approach for visually representing the informal structuring of relationships in a network. It involves identifying and mapping out visually and graphically the web of actors and linkages in and around the network. The core of active actors (including network facilitators and informal leaders) may be represented in an 'inner

circle', with a series of wider circles of interaction including less active members to be mobilised, fellow travellers and potential contributors, and finally external stakeholders. Interaction lines provide a qualitative indication of interaction, rather than frequency.

- *Appreciative inquiry* (AI) is an approach to capacity assessment through systematic discovery of what gives 'life' to a human system when it is most effective and most constructively capable (Barrett and Fry, 2005). AI involves asking questions and sharing stories about best experiences, contributing factors, core values, and wishes for the future. This and other asset-based approaches to capacity assessment (as opposed to the more deficit-based approaches focusing on gap analysis) allow managers and consultants to identify and mobilise existing capabilities. Through storytelling, network members name, and thus bring to a level of consciousness, capabilities that they can utilise and build on. AI also focuses on identifying positive potential and possibilities for the future, and is thus well suited to mobilise energy for change.
- Management approaches and tools that have been inspired by complexity theory are particularly well suited for networks - e.g. broad goals, a 'good enough' vision and minimum specifications (Zimmerman et al., 1998) allow managers to work within a coherent and strategic framework, including prospects for building capacity, while leaving space for flexibility and adjustment to diverse contexts and realities in which members operate (see examples in 'Managing and serving the network', section 4).
- Horelli (2002) has proposed an approach to planning and evaluation that is adapted to networks, emphasising participatory planning, self-evaluation, a participatory learning/feedback and adjustment process. She relies on a number of tools, including visual mapping of actors and their interactions, storytelling which allows rich descriptions of network dynamics over time, and analysis/reflection integrated into network activities.
- Approaches to *participatory monitoring and evaluation* including: contribution assessments and story building (Church et al., 2002), the most significant change technique (Davies and Dart, 2003) and Outcome Mapping (IDRC, see Earl et al., 2001). Details of these approaches are presented in Annex B.

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#### Notes

- 6 Accompaniment to develop capacity versus training or transfer of knowledge originates from the French word *compagnonnage* - a tradition of mutual help and professional development that involves a certain amount of sharing of ideals, and learning together through practice in order to gain mastery.
- 7 For a practical example of how social actor mapping has been used in a conservation and development intervention, see Mahanty (2002).



## 5.2 Implications for funders

Participants in the ECDPM-SVN-UNDP workshop noted that donor interventions with networks are mainly in the form of projects, usually of limited duration, that rely on input-output models (e.g. logical frameworks) and measure success in relation to the attainment of clear, measurable results. The characterisation of networks offered by workshop participants and reflected in this paper suggests a need for approaches that better reflect the dynamic, fluid qualities of networks and the importance of participation, process and attention to how capacity issues play themselves out in networks.

### Making choices about investing in a network vs. an organisation

- *Clarify the issue and purpose* and determine if a network is most suited to addressing the need or issue. If the desired outcome is the creation of new knowledge, innovation, engaging multiple actors from diverse organisations or disciplines to collaborate and jointly act/learn, then investing in a network makes sense. If there is a need to assure consistent and predictable results, e.g. for service delivery, then contracting with one or several organisations may be a better choice.
- *Assess existing and potential capacity of a network.* Identify and map the web of actors and linkages associated with an existing or prospective network, including relationships of scale, collaboration, existing and potential capabilities, divergence and power, actors' strategies, and processes of generation and transformation of ideas in the network.
- *Knowing how the network relates to the formal structures* in-country is important to gauge the potential for network impact on formal institutional policies and practices, and/or on the kind of change to which the network hopes to contribute. It is also important to ensure that investing in a network will add value to the landscape of capacity within a country/region or sector, rather than 'de-capacitate' institutions.

### Making choices about interventions

If, as Morgan suggests, developing capacity is about empowerment and identity as well as collective ability, then the question is how to intervene without undermining capacity and disempowering actors. The following emerge from the cases reviewed and the literature as sound principles for supporting capacity development in networks:

- avoid 'model network' or blueprint strategies;
- engage/accompany the network rather than take over;
- share knowledge rather than rely on an expert-counterpart model or knowledge transfer approach;
- invest for the long-term; and
- rely on participatory approaches to M&E.

#### => **Avoid 'model network' or 'blueprint strategies'**

Mkandawire cautions that 'there is a tendency among donors in search of success stories to exhibit irrational exuberance about certain institutional arrangements... and given their quest for homogeneity and risk aversion, the chances are that donors will tend to propose models that facilitate monitoring rather than innovation and serendipity'. Successful research networks now functioning in Africa did not arrive by similar routes. Rather, they are 'reflections of different origins and different trajectories traversed over the years. In the process most networks have accumulated a wealth of experience, some of which constitute vital social capital that could be dissipated by forcing conformity to a model of another network' (quoted in Prewitt, 1998:14).

#### => **Engage/accompany - maintain ownership**

Experience suggests that the more donors take the lead in defining goals, partners and outcomes, the more they tend to drive the network, lessen the chances of ownership and sustainability, and hence undermine the essence of networking. Given these tendencies, it has been suggested that donors should act as sponsors, ensuring that ownership remains with the network.

Some participants in the workshop in The Hague argued that there is a risk with donor-driven network initiatives, particularly if donors come to see networks as 'the answer to their newest priority'. An existing network may not be strong enough to absorb donor-sponsored initiatives, may have difficulty 'saying no', or could have its own mandate and priorities distorted in the process. While recognising that this can be a risk, others argue that it does not really matter whether a network is created by a funder or not, as long as ownership is maintained. Funders that are supportive and play a facilitating rather than a controlling role, can effectively support capacity development and foster ownership.

External intervention strategies or approaches that have contributed to the emergence and development of network capacity while maintaining ownership

include the following:

- *Creating protected space*, convening and facilitating exchange among otherwise isolated individuals and organisations (e.g. PAHO in the case of the Brazilian Observatorio).
- *Contributing human and financial resources* to facilitate communication, support joint initiatives, provide seed funding for projects or developing capacity, and contribute some operating costs for a secretariat (e.g. IDRC's policy research networks).
- *Sharing of knowledge and expertise* that would not otherwise be accessible (e.g. donors shared documents on the PRSP with the Ghana Growth and Poverty Forum).

#### => **Sharing and creation of information and know-how**

Fukuda-Parr and Hill (2002) argue that a different model of technical cooperation is needed to support of capacity development in networks: 'A new model of development cooperation for capacity-building is emerging for the network age. Sharing and creation of information and know-how is replacing the transfer of know-how through the 'expert-counterpart' model of technical cooperation and knowledge transfer' (pp.185 and 194).

In the Information Age, new modalities are emerging for information access, capacity building and knowledge acquisition, helping to overcome some of the failures of conventional technical cooperation, e.g. depending on donor-established channels for knowledge access. Knowledge acquisition has become one of the essential facets of capacity development, requiring the expansion of South-South and South-everywhere exchanges via knowledge networks. Networks of development practitioners across the globe are emerging, sharing relevant knowledge, information and experience from good/bad practices. They connect these people in different sectors and project areas, fostering collaboration between individuals and institutions. The network is its own source of support, and usually a superior one to that provided by a few experts.

#### => **Invest for the long term**

Networks take time to develop relationships of trust, effective mechanisms for communications and collaboration, in order to yield results. Much attention needs to be paid to nurturing relationships, connecting people to each other, reaching agreements, etc. As indicated in this paper, networks are fluid and those that are effective rely on a stable core of people and resources

to grow and perform. This requires investing in processes - communication, dialogue and exchange of experiences.

For networks to mature often takes longer than the traditional 3-4 year time frame for donor projects. Liebler and Ferri (2004) have argued that while donor support is most crucial at network start up, it should be long-term, not driven excessively by 'results orientation' and should include core funding, not just support for projects. Prewitt supports this, advising that funders should avoid the tendency to 'get something started and then let others keep it going' (Prewitt, 1998: 44).

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between sustainability of networks and sustainable impact of development investments. In the case of Observatorio, for example, stakeholders agreed that only through a process of institutionalisation could human resource issues in Brazil's health sector be addressed effectively over the long term. In other words, the sustainability of *Observatorio*, as a network, was seen as key.

In other cases, sustainability of the network is not necessarily a central objective, particularly if the network is seen as a vehicle for addressing short- to medium-term objectives (e.g. policy reform, advocacy). In such cases, external interveners need to distinguish between institutional sustainability (i.e. of the network) and sustainability of the development objective (e.g. improving sector performance). Achieving the latter may or may not depend on the former, and seeking to institutionalise or 'sustain' a network carries certain risks, including potentially de-capacitating member organisations.

#### => **Rely on participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation**

While this paper is about networks and capacity, inevitably the discussion turns to the issue of performance and associated issues such as accountability for network performance. While there is much excitement about networks, most notably their potential to contribute to important change processes, much of the evidence about network performance is still anecdotal.

Most networks operate through volunteer contributions and with secretariats that have limited resources. They tend to focus their limited energy on keeping the network working and on the future, rather

than on looking back. Unless a network is required to track achievement of results for external accountability purposes, M&E is likely to be a low priority.

Nevertheless, it is understood that networks need to be able to demonstrate their value to members and to potential funders in order to sustain support and contributions. They also need to track innovations, capacity synergies and products of their collaboration. Networks will tend to engage in M&E to the extent that it serves the needs of the network, such as by providing data for increasing its public profile, demonstrating added value to members, etc.

#### Box 11: Monitoring networks

COEP has *not explicitly monitored its performance* or the social effectiveness or impact of the changes brought about by its participating organisations and their projects (841 had been supported by COEP by June 2004). Evaluation would probably be a *low priority* for most people in the network. COEP has an activist culture and its participants use their time to act on social issues. 'Cadernos' (notebooks) and videos record successful projects. These raise the public profile of the COEP network. 'Reference projects' are identified as being particularly innovative, and information on these is made available to members and other development organisations (Saxby, 2004).

Monitoring and evaluating network capabilities, value added and outcomes is difficult for a number of reasons:

- Establishing cause and effect relationships between network inputs or activities and outputs, e.g. at the level of policy change, new learning, or service delivery enhancement, is not straightforward.

#### Notes

- 8 In a research network, intermediate indicators could include products of collaborative work among members on a given research issue, opening up of dialogue among researchers and with policy makers, increased legitimacy of research findings and use of findings in policy formulation, and retaining and enhancing capacity in local institutions where these might have withered away (Yeo, 2004). In a knowledge and innovation network, intermediate indicators could include exchange of information and practices that allowed members to act at their level, innovations that have come about through exchange, increased profile to advocate for change, new practices introduced in institutions, etc.

Networks are fluid and their trajectories are not easily predictable.

- Networks are characterised by diffused, emerging loci of action, making tracking of results very difficult.
- Almost inevitably, significant change processes (which networks are often established to address) take time and the contribution of networks to those processes is difficult to measure, especially in the short to medium term. This suggests a need to think more about intermediate indicators<sup>8</sup> of network performance and an articulated theory of the kinds of changes to which a given network may contribute over a period of time.

Joint development of the monitoring and evaluation methodology by network leaders and donors, could be a productive step toward framing expectations and assessing whether or not they are being reached, including expectations regarding issues such life expectancy of the network, innovation and potential for higher-level impacts.

### 5.3 Wisdom from the field and food for thought

The findings presented in this paper suggest that managers, consultants and practitioners in funding agencies who have worked with a mindset and set of skills appropriate to organisations may need to broaden their perspectives, enrich their skill set and expand their tool box if they want to effectively support capacity development in networks. Similarly, consideration may have to be given to organisational procedures and requirements to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible and responsive to the needs of developing country networks. A key challenge is whether managers and officers in donor agencies can create enough space within their agencies to innovate in their dealings with networks, and to adopt approaches that foster innovation, learning and risk taking.

The evidence also suggests that developing capacity in networks requires facilitators, people with skills to engage in productive dialogue and reach shared agreements, ability to connect and empower others, to work with informality and fluidity.

We conclude with some wisdom from Mahanty (2002), drawn from a paper on conservation and development interventions in India. We hope that it will offer food for thought and insights for those seeking to strengthen the capacity of development networks in the future:

- Networks evolve in an existing context of agendas and relationships, which then shape their evolution. It is important to take time to understand the history of interactions among actors before projects begin - especially at the site-specific level - and the diversity of objectives guiding them.
- There needs to be space for dialogue and conflict management on fundamental issues. When there are deep seated differences on these issues, it is difficult to come to negotiated pragmatic paths of action acceptable to all actors.
- While the eco-development designers articulated a desire to move away from a blueprint approach to interventions (World Bank), the strongly hierarchical structure of the Forest Department enabled a limited degree of innovation and flexibility for field staff. An intervention aiming to change the nature of the relationships between agencies and other groups, and to work in a flexible and participatory mode, cannot escape the wider questions about the structure and dynamics of the facilitating organisations, and the skills, views and capabilities of key staff.
- Even the most apparently powerless actors, such as villagers and tribal authorities, ultimately hold the power of complicity or disengagement. Project design that is locked in from the outset, leaving no space for facilitators to accommodate alternative visions, can lead to conflict and ultimately failure.
- Although there is growing recognition that adaptive and learning approaches to interventions are needed, we are some distance from achieving this in practice. Time constraints, the need to prescribe budgets, activities and outputs, and strongly hierarchical organisational structures pose barriers to process interventions.
- For conservation practitioners, a key issue is the need to attend to the process of identifying, negotiating and establishing a network among key actors as a central part of the intervention rather than as a secondary annoyance in the achievement of goals.

## Annex A. Diversity of network forms

	'NETWORKING'	INFORMAL NETWORKS	NETWORKS WITH SOME 'FORMAL' ELEMENTS (wide range of forms)	INSTITUTIONALISED NETWORKS	INTER-ORGANISATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
<b>Form of organising</b>	Web of relationships - loose ties of information exchange and reciprocity, fuelled by trust	Self-governing and self-regulating  Members develop ways to arrive at some agreements  Highly dependent on informal leadership to achieve purpose	Network with a name and collective identity  Guiding principles and norms for decision making and emerging, or even relatively well established governance structures  A small secretariat facilitates the functioning of the network and is primarily accountable to network members	Legally recognised entities with institutional legitimacy; can attract large project funding from the state, private sector, donors.  Structures and systems to manage and account for complex funded projects, and to rapidly disseminate information and innovation	Contractual relationships, agreements and accountabilities where funded projects and delivering on results are the main drivers.
<b>Capacity / added value</b>	Connections/ Relationships  Access to information and experience	Space to exchange information, develop knowledge and practices and/or mobilise as an alliance/coalition to advocate for change	Collective identity and external legitimacy  Capability to synthesise learning, to do research, to move things forward between meetings, to mobilise the network for joint action and to manage relationships	Capacity to scale up and to take on complex, externally funded projects as a network with greater impact	Capacity to address complex local, regional or global policy issues or integrated service delivery - requiring collaboration among different stakeholder groups and organisations
<b>Potential challenges and limitations</b>	Benefits accrue mostly to individuals, with limited impact on organisations or institutionalisation	Limited external legitimacy  Risk of dissention around purpose	Due to limitations of resources and the challenges of complexity, there is a risk that the secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is viewed by others as capable of taking on more than it can.</li> <li>• can begin to substitute for the network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The secretariat can become driven by contracts and funding imperatives.</li> <li>• Competition for access to resources can arise within the network. This may lead to loss of trust and less willingness to share information freely.</li> <li>• Routinisation can reduce the free flow of information and limit dynamism and innovation</li> </ul>	Fostering and maintaining trust, joint ownership and collaboration  Possible competition and conflict over who holds power and has access to resources can lead to disengagement of key actors, loss of key capabilities and legitimacy

## Annex B. Capacity and networks: resources and insights for monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of network performance, and capacity development of networks, can be challenging for development practitioners given the fluid, dynamic nature of networks, the difficulty of measuring changes in capacity and the sometimes ambiguous link between capacity and performance. The sources identified below provide some leads on emerging thinking and practice on these issues.

- Church, M. *et al.* (2002) *Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change: New Thinking on Evaluating the Work of International Networks*. Development Planning Unit, University College of London, Working Paper 121.

Church *et al.* note that: 'Evaluation needs to be able to analyse change both internally, at the level of processes, and externally, at the level of influencing activities' (p.2). The paper outlines a series of tools which have been developed to help with process-based activities. These include the following (in brief):

*Contributions assessment.* This tool is intended to help networks understand the level of commitment and contribution of participants and where resources exist in the network. As the authors suggest, this approach can 'help to assess the dynamism and growth potential of the network' emphasising positive features rather than looking for deficits.

*Checklist for networks.* The checklist incorporates possible evaluation questions on a range of topics from participation, to relationship-building and trust, facilitative leadership, structure and control, diversity and dynamism, and decentralisation and democracy.

*Participatory story-building.* This interactive evaluative exercise maps the networks 'story of change'. It highlights feature such as the extent to which strategies and understanding of the context is shared, how shared information and analyses have helped advance the network's interests, how well connected the network is and what the added value of the network has been.

Church *et al.* present other *tools for measuring dynamism*, including Weaver's triangle for networks, circles or channels of participation, participation and information flows, e.g. the Women's Global Network on Reproductive Rights (WGNRR).

- Karl, M., A. Anand, F. Blankenberg, A. van den Ham and A. Saldanha, Eds (1999) *Measuring the Unmeasurable: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Networks*. New Delhi, India: Women's Feature Service. [www.wfsnews.org/book2.html](http://www.wfsnews.org/book2.html)

Karl *et al.* suggest that 'network co-ordinators have much implicit understanding about the kinds of criteria they use to determine the success of their work. Many networks continuously evaluate the changes they have managed to bring about, and the changing contexts within which they work. Yet most of this monitoring and evaluating is done live, and in interactive ways which do not get written down.' Quoting from Church *et al.*, Karl *et al.* also suggest that standard planning and M&E methodologies were found wanting by most of the networks they studied.

- Patton, M.Q. (1997) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patton's emphasis is, not surprisingly, on use, and underlying theories of change. Patton refers to a 'chain of objectives' (p.218)

- Fetterman, D. (1996) *Collaboration, Action Research and a Case Example*. Action Evaluation Project, ARIA Group. [www.preval.org/documentos/00551.pdf](http://www.preval.org/documentos/00551.pdf)

According to Church *et al.* (2002: 7-8), David Fetterman's *empowerment evaluation approach* 'matches, or "fits" the network project at the level of values, and its emphasis on democratising the process through participation. It employs the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination. It employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. ... It is designed to help people help themselves and improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection.... This process is fundamentally

democratic in the sense that it invites (if not demands) participation, examining issues of concern to the entire community in an open forum' (Fetterman, 2001: 3).

- Earl, S., F. Carden and T. Smutylo (2001) *Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*. Ottawa: IDRC. [www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26586-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26586-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

Outcome mapping grew out of the difficulty experienced by IDRC (and other agencies) in assessing and evaluating the impact of its programmes. Outcome mapping, as a methodology, assesses the contributions a programme makes to the achievement of 'outcomes' (as opposed to 'impacts'). The focus is on people and organisations, in particular changes in behaviours, relationships, actions, and/or activities of the people, organisations or networks, as well as the influence of programmes on the roles played in development processes. It is thus seen as a useful framework to monitor and evaluate 'influencing' interventions

#### Other sources on M&E, networks and capacity:

- Bernard, A.K. (1996) *IDRC Networks: An Ethnographic Perspective*. Ottawa: IDRC. [www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26858-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26858-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)
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- Davies, R. (2003) *Network Perspectives in the Evaluation of Development Interventions: More than a Metaphor*. Paper presented at EDAIS conference, New Directions in Impact Assessment for Development Interventions: Methods and Practice. [www.mande.co.uk/docs/nape.pdf](http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/nape.pdf)
- Davies, R. and J. Dart (2005) *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use*. [www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm](http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm)
- Eoyang, G.H, and T.H. Berkas (1998) *Evaluation in a Complex Adaptive System*. [www.chaos-limited.com/EvalinCAS.pdf](http://www.chaos-limited.com/EvalinCAS.pdf)
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**The results of the study, interim reports and an elaborated methodology can be consulted at [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org) or [www.ecdpm.org](http://www.ecdpm.org). For further information, please contact Ms Anje Jooya ([ahk@ecdpm.org](mailto:ahk@ecdpm.org)).**

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