Study on Capacity, Change and Performance

Networks as a Form of Capacity

Workshop report

Hosted by SNV, UNDP and ECDPM
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1   Introduction

The workshop on **Networks as a Form of Capacity** took place in the context of the study on **Capacity, Change and Performance**, a large research project which the chair of the Governance Network of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee asked ECDPM to undertake in 2002. The study aims to develop a better understanding of how capacity develops endogenously in organisations and systems, and includes 18 case studies and a number of theme papers. An important finding of the study is that one of the most interesting forms of capacity emerging in many countries is the capacity embedded in networks.

To explore and share experiences with respect to networks and capacity, ECDPM, SNV and UNDP organised this workshop which brought together developing country practitioners, staff from international development agencies, researchers and other interested individuals. The **workshop's objectives** were:
1. To develop a deeper understanding of networks as a form of capacity and what distinguishes this form of capacity conceptually and in practical terms from other forms of capacity,
2. To explore why and how networks emerge as a form of capacity and how capacity develops in networks, and to
3. To explore implications for addressing capacity issues and challenges in networks.

This report provides a summary of the main issues discussed, including key observations and conclusions drawn by workshop participants. The report should be read in conjunction with the discussion paper on Networks and Capacity by Suzanne Taschereau and Joe Bolger[1] and the COEP and Observatorio case studies.[2]

2   Why are we interested in networks and capacity?

At the beginning of the workshop, participants identified a number of issues and questions which were of particular interest to them. These included the following:
- **Leadership** in networks - forms of leadership; how it develops over time
- **Formal and informal relations** - beyond structures (e.g. power relations, market forces, and prestige)
- **Gender and intercultural issues** in networks.
- **External partners** - *what contribution they can make to networks.*
- How networks **influence public policy.**
- **Networking** and networks.
- **How networks can work together**.
- **Strengths and weaknesses** of networks.
- **Capacity in networks and networks as capacity** - What is it about networks that contributes to or constitutes capacity?
- The **different forms** networks take (e.g. informal, formal, cultural differences)
- **How do networks emerge?** - What builds/initiates a new network?
- What **drivers** and characteristics push networks forward?
- **How networks scale up** - Do scaled-up or more formalised networks lose effectiveness? How to strengthen networks without stifling or killing them.
- What **alternative theories of change** are linked to networks?
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of networks**.**

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[1] Taschereau, S. and Bolger, J., 2005. *Networks and Capacity*. Maastricht: ECDPM.
[2] Saxby, J. 2004. COEP-Comitê de Entidades no Combate à Fome e pela Vida - Mobilising against hunger and for life: An analysis of capacity and change in a Brazilian network (Discussion Paper, 57C). Maastricht: ECDPM and Campos, F.E., V. Hauck. 2005. Networking collaboratively - The Brazilian Observatório on Human Resources in Health (Discussion Paper, 57L). Maastricht: ECDPM.

- *Results, sustainability* and *coordination*.
- *Strengths* and *weaknesses* of networks
- *Can networks weaken existing organisations*?
- *Are networks over-idealised*?
- *How to strengthen networks - intervention strategies.*
- *Networks and poverty alleviation.*

3 What are networks? - Some key points

This section of the report is based on the presentation of the paper on Networks and Capacity and subsequent discussion. It only highlights key points and issues discussed, and should be read in conjunction with the paper.

The growth of networks is a response to complex problems which require social collaboration, and has been facilitated by increased access to information technologies. While there is extensive literature on networks, little empirical work has been done on the link between networks and capacity, an issue which the workshop aimed to address.

Box 1: What is a network?

The discussion paper for the workshop uses a broad definition of networks:
- Groups of individuals and/or organisations
- With a common concern or interest
- Who contribute knowledge, experience and/or resources for shared learning, joint action or to achieve a shared purpose or goal
- Who may also rely on the network to support their own objectives

Source: Networks and Capacity (as above)

Networks take many different forms.[3] They are more or less formalised social arrangements which evolve over time. Networks tend to emerge and evolve within a dynamic interplay of endogenous and external factors. Endogenous factors include pre-existing relationships among like-minded individuals and organisations motivated to act together, the existence of political space, leadership, vision, credibility and legitimacy. External factors, such as funding or communications support, can also affect the emergence and trajectory of networks over time. It was suggested in the workshop that one of the benefits of networks and a reason for our interest in them is that they can *create a capacity that is greater than the sum of their parts* (1+1≥ 3).

The paper presented noted that while there are many different types of networks, they tend to share certain characteristics (e.g. voluntary and adaptive nature, negotiated order, shared accountability). Networks also rely on certain capabilities to function effectively (e.g. strategic management, ability to manage complexity, work across boundaries, be agile and responsive to changing environments).

Questions and issues raised in discussion

Various points were raised in the discussion period following presentation of the paper. One participant suggested that the idea of networks as a 'form of capacity' was useful but 'grey', while another other suggested that we should think of networks as a 'form of organising' and focus on their 'value added'. Others described networks as 'outbursts of energy' or fluid processes that contribute to social capital.

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[3] See the 'Typology of networks' in Taschereau & Bolger (p.3) for an overview of how different types of networks have been categorised in the literature and by practitioners.

One of the workshop participants suggested a need to test some of the assumptions and ideas in the paper (e.g. about shared goals, in/formal nature of networks, why individuals or organizations join networks). Another intervener underlined the need to explore the significance of networks in responding to development challenges, for example how it might vary by context and what the implications are for decisions about interventions by external actors.

Other comments and questions were as follows:
- Are networks a means to an end or an end in themselves? A strategy or a result? It was suggested that they are probably both.
- What makes networks work over time? What are the tensions that need to be managed?
- Why do networks join other networks?
- How representative are networks?
- There is a distinction between enhancing the network members' capacity versus enhancing the network's capacity.
- The discussion of 'networks' is really about a continuum of experiences from 'networking' to 'informal networks' to 'formal networks'.
- Different dynamics are at play in different network situations (e.g. depending on financing arrangements, power, stage of development). This raises questions about the capacities required to manage network dynamics at different stages.
- Experiences with networks challenge traditional views about planning.

4 Why do networks emerge? - Views from the field

This section is based on the presentation of experiences by a panel of network practitioners (Francisco Eduardo de Campos - Observatório, Brazil, Emmanuel Akwetey - Institute for Democratic Governance, Ghana, Sarah Earl - IDRC, Canada and Paul Engel - ECDPM, The Netherlands) and subsequent discussion.

Box 2: Why do networks emerge? Why form a network?

Individuals and organisations (and networks) form networks for a number of reasons. These include the desire to:
- To increase access to information, expertise and financial resources
- To increase speed and efficiency
- To respond more effectively to complex realities
- To increase visibility, develop shared practices, mitigate risks, reduce isolation and increase credibility
- To share learning and strengthen advocacy capacity

Forming a network seems to have the potential to create a capacity that is greater than the sum of the parts = Networks (and networking) can become a form of capacity.

Source: Workshop Presentation on networks and Capacity[4]

As the examples discussed during the workshop demonstrated, networks form when there is a common **sense of purpose**. This was the case for the Brazilian *Observatório*, which was established to improve human resources management in the health sector and to support health reform (see Box 3 below). Similarly, the *Growth and Poverty Forum* in Ghana developed out of a **shared frustration** among a number of formal and informal organisations (civil society, private sector, research institutions and trade unions) with their lack of influence on the PRSP process. The Ghanaian case exemplified how organisations and individuals form or join a network out of a recognition that on their own they have limited capacity to successfully engage in processes, such as the development of a PRSP, but by acting together they enhance their capacity to participate in policy dialogue and influence decision-making.

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[4] Bolger, J. 2005. *Workshop Presentation on Networks and Capacity*, The Hague, 20-21 September 2005.

According to the workshop participants, the development or emergence of networks thus, inter alia, allows networks and their members

- to have better and faster *access to information*,
- to *share experiences*,
- to improve their ability to respond to the context they find themselves in and positively *influence* developments,
- to demonstrate their *legitimacy* and gain *access to resources,* and
- to increase their *visibility* and *credibility*,
- while at the same time recognising and *maintaining the diversity* of network members.

Box 3: Case study 1: Observatório - Network on human resources in the health sector in Brazil

The *Observatório* is a network of university institutes, research centres and one federal office dealing with human resource questions in Brazil's health sector. The idea of an *Observatório* was brought into Brazil as part of a regional initiative of PAHO in 1998 to improve human resources policy making throughout Latin America. Today, the *Observatório* consists of 13 network "nodes" which are coordinated via a secretariat consisting of staff members of the Ministry of Health and the Brasilia office of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO).

The network is closely linked to health reforms in Brazil, which started in 1998 and which were designed to create a more equitable and comprehensive health system from the old fragmented social and health systems, which the well-to-do bypassed in favour of private care. At the time, the absence of a common human resource system and the existence of different and unconnected systems at different levels was one of the biggest constraints to the successful implementation of health reform. This triggered the creation of the *Observatório* as a formal network for the health sector to improve human resources planning, development and management.

The network of Brazilian observatorios itself is not a stand-alone network, but belongs to a bigger network of academies in Brazil that support health reform. It is also part of the Latin American Network of Observatórios of Human Resources (LA/ObsNet).

Implementation of this idea can be traced back to Brazil's political liberalisation of the early 1980s which led to more intensive networking among public health specialists. It is thus difficult to understand this network without understanding broader political processes in Brazil.

See also: Networking collaboratively - The Brazilian Observatório on Human Resources in Health (ECDPM Discussion Paper, 57L).[5]

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has made a major commitment to networks of knowledge activists based on a belief that networks can be more effective, in terms of influence, than other forms of organisation. From IDRC's perspective, networks have the ability to:

- Act as *agencies of extension –* expanding outreach (e.g. sharing understanding of water demand management in the Middle East first between researchers, then with policy makers)
- *Enhance the quality of research* - through peer review and other exchanges, especially in new research fields (e.g. tobacco control),
- *Bridge the gap between research and policy* and influence public policy through exchange with policy makers
- *Support local researchers* in developing countries and create space for a 'meeting of minds'.

Creating and sustaining a network - Key points and insights from the discussion

- The main resources required for networks to come together and sustain themselves are usually *endogenous and in-kind rather than monetary contributions*, as neither donors nor networks themselves like financing networking/ mobilisation of members.

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[5] Campos, F.E., V. Hauck. 2005. *Networking collaboratively - The Brazilian Observatório on Human Resources in Health* (ECDPM Discussion Paper, 57L). Maastricht: European Centre for Development Policy Management.

- Nevertheless, a network *sponsor* can be helpful.

- Networks come together when people are passionate about something - when there is a *common sense of purpose*.

- To sustain a network beyond the point of creation the ***links between its members have to be reinforced*** and the network has to ***create an identity*** for itself. There is a cost to this, as network members have to meet to build ***trust and confidence*** and reinforce the sense of common purpose.

- There can be a tension between ***competition and cooperation*** in networks. This raised the question of how competition affects quality.

- It's important to recognize **stages of emergence** of networks.

- The concept of *space* is important for the emergence and development of networks.

- *Managing* the *diversity* of a network is also important - seeking a higher level of interest of all members that unites them behind a purpose despite differences.

- To sustain a network requires a continued ***recognition of its purpose*** – even if the purpose is not well-defined from the outset.

- *Empowerment* (context, space) and the capability to act are both important for a network.

- The ***political environment*** and ***technical expertise*** are important factors in the emergence of networks. ***Leadership and trust*** are also key elements.

Further questions raised on network emergence and sustainability

- What are the links between networks and political systems?

- How can positive and negative motivators affect later workings of networks?

- What is an effective network size? Does purpose influence size?

- Who provides the energy in networks?

- What capacities do networks require to function?

- How do external actors influence networks?

5 What capabilities and capacities are needed to make networks work?

This section is based on the small group discussions held on the three themes listed below: (i) Leadership, (ii) Generative and adaptive capabilities and (iii) Formal and informal element in networks.

Box 4: Definition of capabilities, capacity and competencies

The broader ECDPM study on *Capacity, Change and Performance* uses the following definitions to unpack the idea of individual and collective skills and abilities at different levels.

Competencies - the skills and abilities of individuals.

Capabilities - a broad range of collective skills of organisations or systems which can be both 'hard' (e.g. policy analysis, marine resource assessment, financial resources management) and 'soft' (e.g. the ability to earn legitimacy, to adapt, to create meaning and identity). Capabilities can be understood as the building blocks of an organisation's overall capacity to perform.

Capacity - the overall ability of a system to perform and sustain itself: the coherent combination of competencies and capabilities.

Source: Study on Capacity, Change and Performance - Interim Report[6] and Networks and Capacity (as above)

5.1 Leadership

The group which discussed the role and function of leadership in networks, primarily based on the COEP case, identified a number of *capabilities* and roles which *network leadership* may require at different times. These include:

- **Social commitment**
- **Authenticity** - believing in values, principles and objectives of the network, contributing to its credibility and legitimacy
- **Dynamism** - keeping the energy feeding the network flowing ("providing the fire under the network soup" as one participant described it)
- **Legitimacy, credibility**
- Listening to **diversity** in the network
- Building **consensus**
- Providing **space** for others to act and express themselves
- Not acting hierarchically
- Dealing with **competition** and trying to bring parties with diverging views together to make things work
- Dealing with **change** in networks
- Dealing with **hegemonies**
- Being a leader of the **cause** which the networks stands for
- **Facilitating and animating** others to network
- Making use of resources in networks
- Being visionary, having insights, being able to think strategically

In identifying a range of leadership capabilities which networks may require at different points in time, it was noted that *some* of these *capabilities can be learnt*, while others cannot. Identifying the minimum requirements for successful network leadership may be the challenge, as few real life leaders have all these characteristics.

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[6] Morgan, P., A. Land, H. Baser. 2005. *Study on Capacity, Change and Performance – Interim report.* (ECDPM Discussion Paper, 59A). Maastricht: European Centre for Development Policy Management.

There are also *different styles and forms of network leadership*. Network leadership does not have to be centred on one person but *can be* (and often is) *shared* by a group of leaders, who together may possess a broader range of the capabilities listed above and are able to fulfil the diverse leadership roles.

Dealing with succession and the *loss of a charismatic leader* are particular challenges for networks. A good network structure may 'pull out' new, committed leaders, or may be able to compensate for the loss of a charismatic leader. Informal groups may also take over part of the leadership (e.g. strategic thinking).

A keenly debated issue during the workshop was whether networks can flourish under '*authoritarian leadership'*. Participants felt that in networks where members can easily opt out, a *facilitative* style of leadership is a necessity. However, in other networks , where membership may be 'less voluntary' , more directive or authoritarian leadership may be accepted by its members. This might occur, for example, where membership is a pre-condition for access to funds, or in a culture where authoritarian leadership styles are more commonly accepted.

5.2 Generative and adaptive capabilities

This section draws mainly on the small group discussion. It is recommended to read it in conjunction with the sections on generative and adaptive capabilities in the discussion paper on Networks and Capacity.

Box 5: Key capabilities required to make networks work

Generative capabilities – the abilty to work across boundaries, learn how to learn, lead in new ways, take a systems view, act with agility, align network form with purpose

Adaptive capabilities – the capability to strategically adjust thinking and actions in response to changing circumstances based on improved knowledge and understanding.

Source: Networks and Capacity (as above)

Effective networks not only need to possess the *'generative capabilities*[7] that allow them to work across boundaries or learn how to learn, but also need *adaptive capabilities* to enable them to strategically adapt to changing circumstances. The group which discussed these capabilities used the COEP experience as its main example.

Participants suggested that effective networks need a mixture of generative and adaptive capabilities. They need to be able to:
- Build consensus
- Effect change
- Have insights
- Facilitate activities by others
- Maintain identity
- Create space for people who think differently
- Deal with internal conflicts (through a code of conduct)
- Move to multiple leadership

The group further identified specific generative capabilities required in effective networks:
- Developing a systems view
- Building a positive vision
- Balancing autonomy and interdependence

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[7] Generative or 'soft' capabilities are identified as a type of capabilities by Liebler and Ferri, Liebler, C., M. Ferri. 2004. *NGO Networks: Building Capacity in a Changing World.* Washington: Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation.

- Aligning organisations
- Creating new kinds of leadership
- Looking across boundaries
- Acting with agility
- Managing competition and cooperation
- Learning how to learn
- Accessing the potential of technology

Box 6: Case study 2: COEP - Brazilian social solidarity network

COEP (*o Comitê de Entidades no Combate à Fome e pela Vida* - the Committee of Entities in the Struggle against Hunger and for a Full Life) is committed to building a just and inclusive society for all Brazilians, one without hunger and poverty. Its members include government agencies, parastatals, and organisations from the private sector and civil society. COEP is, in fact, a network of networks, active federally, in all of Brazil's 27 states, and now also at the municipal level. Its strategies include encouraging its members to support and participate in development projects to combat poverty, organising campaigns to mobilise public and institutional resources to end poverty, and promoting cooperation among its affiliates in their development work and campaigns.

COEP's performance has been remarkable. Since 30 national enterprises declared their affiliation in August 1993, the network has grown and diversified and now counts more than 800 member organisations. COEP's success is founded on its substantial internal resources, both intangible and material, which reinforce each other.

- COEP has benefited from creative, even inspired, **leadership** at national and state levels, which enjoys substantial legitimacy within the network and beyond. That legitimacy has been recognised and carefully maintained. Its leadership has nurtured **COEP's legitimacy** as an actor in public life by maintaining a **politically non-partisan** stance while retaining its original values and purpose.

- The network has shown a considerable and sustained **capability for strategic thinking and change**, continuously renewing itself while maintaining its character and principles.

- None of this would be possible without the **commitment of its institutional members**, and even more the **passion, ideas and energy** that the people in COEP bring to their work.

Complementing these intangibles are two significant material factors.

- COEP has been sustained by **major financial and in-kind contributions** from its affiliates.

- The network also relies on an **effective web of electronic communications**, and is able to draw upon the substantial technical resources and national reach of its member entities.

The network shows numerous paradoxes in its style, dynamics and structure. These appear to be sources of creative tension which are yet to be articulated and understood. The paradoxes include the following:

- COEP is **not formally registered**, and its non-hierarchical design is intended to make space for **diversity, creativity and energy**, and to encourage participation. In its daily and strategic workings the network relies heavily on **informal power** – the chemistry among its people, their knowledge and contacts. Yet it is not a loose or simple organisation. Its guiding principles are clear and its statutes detailed. It is **tightly organised and increasingly complex**. Its governance structures are consistent across networks at national, state and municipal levels, and as COEP has grown, it has elaborated its administrative and operational capabilities.

- Politically, COEP is **consciously non-partisan**, yet must be **politically astute** because it operates in a charged institutional milieu. It is engaged with the big development issues – poverty and social justice – which are inescapably political.

- COEP's activists feel strongly about the organisation and its work, and there are **strong personalities** within the network, yet it has largely been **free of divisive conflict**, and has not been captured by personal, political or commercial agendas.

5.3 Formal and informal elements in networks

The group covering this theme considered various issues, including the interplay between formal and informal aspects of networks, the choices made about formal versus informal structures, and the capabilities required to recognise and address these issues. They used the Observatorio case, with its secretariat and the 13 different network 'nodes', as its main example. The following issues were highlighted:

- How does the ***transition from an informal to a formal network*** come about? Informal structures avoid rigidity and allow networks to grow organically, while legal and administrative requirements may necessitate a formal network structure. How to go about formalising a network without inhibiting its informal, dynamic elements?

- There is a dilemma which every network, formal and informal, faces: ***Every formal network has informal elements and every informal network has formal elements*** – How to deal with this? How does informality limit or support effectiveness?

- The capacity for using informal power is particularly strong in networks – ***networks*** can be the ***creative use of informal power***. The challenge is to make this power accountable without squashing it. One of the motivations for participation in a network may be that it gives members space to exert an influence which they do not have in their own organisations.

- ***Leadership*** and ***legitimacy*** are important factors in the emergence of a network. However, once the benefits of a network are unevenly distributed, cracks or factions may appear. Sometimes this is linked with the move towards formality.

- ***Representativeness*** and ***ownership*** – there are different degrees of influence within a network; sometimes a question of "who can pull the plug".

- ***Power*** - no single person can *assume* power in a network, it has to be *conferred.*

- ***Building capacities*** and associated tensions - Networks can build capacities through developing procedures etc., but they may need to enhance the capacity of some members to ensure equitable involvement.

- The ***impetus to formalise*** a network can be either external or internal. There can be a risk in this process that some members 'kidnap' the network.

- ***Formalisation*** – can lead to increasing centralisation which can diminish the essential quality of a network. However, some networks are effectively driven by a core group (depends on the purpose of the network and whether it is being addressed adequately; also depends on whether authority has been conferred by members). In the case of *Observatorio*, the decentralized nodes became leaders.

- Networks need ***financial autonomy*** – diversification of resources and support is important, as is the sharing of the financial burden.

- Networks sometimes ***compete*** with their members ***for financial resources***.

- Network members can have ***conflicting interests***.

- ***Interest in participation*** can be seen as an indicator of the viability of a network – if members don't see participation as a worthwhile investment, it doesn't bode well for the network.

- The ***freedom to leave*** is an important feature of networks. However, networks may face different pressures to maintain members as they become more formalized.

- There are different ***stages in the growth of a network*** – the first years can be hard as internal struggles and positioning takes place.

- Participants considered the question 'What ***capacities*** are ***required to address***

formal/informal network issues?' It was generally felt that leadership ("a particular form/quality") was especially important. This was described in various ways: 'statesmen' vs politicians; somebody who understands the bigger picture and has the ability to build towards it; someone "who can play a big role, but share (symphonise)." It was also noted that member organizations need to provide space for network leaders to emerge.

Box 7: Some key features of networks

After the small group and plenary discussions on the first day of the workshop, participants identified a number of network features and selected questions which had struck them as being of key importance in the emergence and functioning of networks.

- Networks as *organic entities* (the 'soup' analogy); others referred to networks as being like a jazz ensemble.

- The importance of managing *diversity* and maintaining *creativity.*

- The dynamic between *informal and formal elements.*

- The *different types and roles of network leadership* ranging from facilitative to 'authoritarian' and from leadership by one person to group leadership, and requiring a diversity of capabilities – "There is no job description".

- Some degree of commonality and a *common sense of purpose* are required for networks to come together in the first place, but there is also a need to nurture a common *identity* to keep the network going.

- *Trust* and the *quality of relationships* in the network are important for members to commit the time and resources to maintain the network.

- Networks are *fluid* and have a fundamentally *flexible* nature. Members may belong to many networks, and may face the challenge of collaborating with many partners (within and across networks) without losing their own identitiy.

- Internal and external *legitimacy* are important (but different) – the former, in particular, involves governing by consent and feedback loops.

- The external *space and context*, and their dynamics, are important (e.g. social or political movements). Reading the environment is critical (thus the importance of adaptive capabilities).

- Networks can occupy a *social role* and exercise *power* – What are the capabilities required for this?

- Networks as a result of the combination of three aspects (3 circles): *political opportunity*, *technical expertise* and *leadership*. A fourth important element is that networks have *membership*. In the soup analogy, the network 'soup' has many cooks but the ingredients must be there.

- At least formally, membership in networks is *voluntary*. Members have the possibility to *opt in and opt out* of networks – What are the implications of this?

- What is a good *network size*?

- Networks as a *continuum of experiences and forms* – How to make sense of this?

- Some networks *can become dysfunctional if managed*.

- The clarity of *network objectives* – can objectives crowd or stifle networks?

6 Implications for addressing capacity issues in networks

This section draws on the small group and plenary discussions held on the second day of the workshop.

6.1 How do we need to think about capacity when talking about and engaging networks?

- ***The different ways in which networks function***, compared to organisations, have implications for how we need to think about capacities in networks, e.g. their voluntary nature, the need to constantly 'feed' and mobilize constituencies.

- There is a distinction between the ***capacity of networks*** and the ***capacity of network members***.
    - How does capacity development of the network contribute to capacity development of its members? If a network's capacity is enhanced but not that of its members there is little incentive for them to support the network. Moreover, the relationship between the network members and the secretariat can become a point of tension.
    - Network secretariats can develop into strong entities and come to compete with their network members (for instance where donor funds go to the Secretariat rather than the members).
    - Creating a secretariat can lead to problems. If, for example, members delegate tasks and become less involved, the secretariat can grow stronger with the network increasingly resembling an organisation vs. a membership-driven network.

- ***Networks*** thus not only have the potential to generate capacity, or 'create capacity greater than the sum of its parts', they ***can also have a decapacitating effect*** (1+ 1 = -1), including when there is competition for limited financial resources, or when networks draw human resources away from member organisations.

- As networks have life cycles and tend to be more adaptive to change over time, there are ***peaks and troughs in network capacity***. Networks must have some base capacity simply to exist, but can rise to peak capacity at times (the bubbles of energy in the 'networks-as-a-soup' analogy).

- The capacity of a network ***depends on what kind of network*** it is. As there are many different types of networks some felt it is difficult to generalise about this.

- ***Context matters*** – as it either provides the space, or not, for the emergence and effective functioning of networks.

- One participant asked if we should "think of ***networks as flexible organisations*** or ***organisations as rigid networks***". It was suggested that maybe the difference is in terms of membership.

6.2 What is different or distinctive about capacity in networks?

- ***Network leadership*** is important. However, network leadership does not have to be vested in one person. Rather it can be collective or distributed.

- While networks may require the ***same capabilities as other organisational forms***, these ***often function in a different way*** given the particular dynamics and characteristics of networks. For example, it was suggested that the qualities needed in a network ***leader*** may be different than for organisational leaders given the greater need to manage complexity, adapt quickly to changes in the internal and external environment, and relate to "members". Leadership in networks was also seen as more distributed, or shared, compared to organisations. It was also noted that in networks people have "roles and responsibilities"

while in organisations people have job descriptions. Other participants were less convinced about differences in leadership capabilities in networks, citing similar challenges faced by managers of large, complex organizations.

- Networks differ from other types of organisational forms in that associating with them is more voluntary. Given that, a network needs to *continuously mobilise* its members to move forward or prevent its collapse. It thus needs to have *convening power* or capacity to bring together its diverse members and sustain their involvement. These features suggested a particular need for capacity to manage participatory processes and different types of accountability.

- It was also noted that among networks there are different '*contractual logics'*, described differently as 'social contracts', 'contracts relating to membership', 'apparent contracts' and the more formalised 'real' contracts, e.g. financial agreements with funders – each of which has implications for how the networks operate and what capacities they require.

- Networks also need *strong adaptive capabilities* to keep them alive in the face of changing contextual realities. The ability to recognise threats and opportunities in the external environment and respond appropriately is vital. This can lead to networks 'reinventing their working forms', although it was noted that many organisations do this as well in response to changes in their environment.

- *How voluntary are networks*? It was suggested that the idea of networks as voluntary entities may be more of an ideal than a reality. Networks exist in a competitive landscape and membership may not always be as voluntary as it seems, for instance if access to funding or participation in policy-making requires network membership. It was suggested that there are different types of networks which operate in a variety of contexts which may be more or less voluntary. Nevertheless, there seem to be *more opportunities to join or leave a network* than is the case for other, more structured and codified organisational forms.

- The voluntary aspect of network membership *creates expectations* on the part of those who join which have to be managed. These include the expectation to be involved or to be heard. Members join to give and to receive. This means networks have to have to the capacity to ensure that members are involved, are heard, their capacities are used etc.

- The existence of *volunteerism* in networks means that they have different skill sets of capacities to draw upon from within their membership depending on the requirements at any point in time.

- The higher the *quality of relationships* in a network, the more successful the network can be, as members are more willing to contribute time and other resources and can work together more effectively. This underlines the importance of having the capacity to mobilize actors and successfully manage relationships.

- Networks can have the *capacity to empower* their members. How can this capacity to have power and influence be created? *Recognition* of the network is part of the answer.

- A question was raised as to *how networks develop capacity* – is it a case of networks having basic or core capacities, or are network capacities emergent or responsive to particular needs.

6.3 What are the implications for network practitioners and funders?

Box 8: Implications for practice

Shift of mindset - adopting a systems perspective, looking for synergies, shared responsibility and accountability

Shift in approach - avoiding blueprint strategies, moving to long-term approach, adopting qualitative approaches e.g. for assessment

Source: Workshop Presentation on Networks and Capacity (as above)

Implications for practitioners

- There is a need to recognise the *life cycles* of networks so as to manage the peaks and valleys which have different requirements

- Network *diversity* has to be addressed and managed, e.g. to avoid inequities and to manage inter-cultural relationships.

- Networks operate in *diverse contexts*. They may have to adapt their form accordingly.

- Practitioners need to think about the *types of capabilities* their network requires.

- Latent *capabilities* in networks *have to be harnessed*.

- *Monitoring and evaluation* should assume a key role, including measuring how well networks are responding to members needs.

- Networks need to identify *what kind of resources members can contribute* (these do not have to be financial, but can be thinking/analytical contributions, administrative assistance etc.). Networks need investment.

Implications for funders

- Donors/funding agencies should *not be too rigid in their requirements or application of their systems*. For instance, they should not end their support if there is a period of uncertainty. They also need to think about what the *nature of the contract/affiliation* with a network should be.

- Supporting networks requires *investing in processes*. It is not clear that funding agencies, with their focus on results, are always able to provide that.

- There is *no prescription* or blueprint for how to intervene in support of networks. A more or less activist approach may be required depending on the circumstances.

- Knowing *how the network relates to* the *formal structures* in-country is important.

- *Monitoring and evaluation* - funders need to think about what *indicators* should be used for monitoring and evaluating *network performance*? They should address qualitative issues. Donors could also experiment more with *capacity assessment tools* to inspire new thinking vs. focusing strictly on 'measurement'.

- When *investing in a network* funders also have to think about *investing in its members*. They also have to be conscious of potentially de-capacitating investments (1+1= -1).

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More information on the study on Capacity, Change and Performance and the publications in its context can be found on the www.capacity.org and the www.ecdpm.org/dcc/capacitystudy websites.

Annexes

Annex 1: Workshop Programme and List of Participants

Workshop Programme

Background and Objectives

One of the most interesting forms of capacity emerging in many countries is that embedded in networks. This workshop which is co-hosted by ECDPM with SNV and the UNDP programme for Capacity Development Innovation will bring together developing country practionners who are engaged in networks together with staff from international funding agencies and other interested observers to reflect on networks as a form of capacity. It will build on the conceptual and case study work undertaken by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) in their study on *Capacity, Change and Performance* and on the literature and practice of relevance to the subject.

The workshop has been structured as a dialogue and space for joint exploration, so as to achieve the following objectives:

1. To develop a deeper understanding of networks as a form of capacity and what distinguishes this form of capacity conceptually and in practical terms from other forms of capacity.

2. To explore why and how networks emerge as a form of capacity and how capacity develops in networks,

3. To explore capacity issues and challenges in networks

A draft discussion paper will be sent to participants in advance of the workshop. The paper reviews the relevant literature and draws on ECDPM case studies to examine: a) why networks emerge as form of capacity : types, motivations and purposes; b) networks as a form of capacity – how do networks develop and what capabilities need developing over time; c) implications for practitioners and funders (both conceptual and operational). Participants' contributions will serve to enrich the paper prior to its publication later this year.

The workshop process and agenda have been designed with a view to achieving the stated outcomes. Precise timing and activities will be adjusted as needed.

Monday evening

5:00 PM   Welcoming reception
                         SNV office, Bezuidenhoutseweg 161. The Hague.

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

8:45   Coffee

9:00   Opening Remarks and Introductions
            Heather Baser, ECDPM

9:30   Networks as a form of capacity – A review of the literature and key issues
            Joe Bolger and Suzanne Taschereau (20 minute overview)
            Followed by participants' initial thoughts: key insights and questions to explore during the workshop

11:00   A view from the field : Why networks emerge as a form of capacity – motivations/ drivers and purposes

Panel of experienced network practitioners hosted by Paul Engel. ECDPM

12:30   Lunch

13.00   Exploring capabilities and how they develop in networks

1) *Capabilities and capacity: what makes networks work?*
Exchange and dialogue in the large group

The afternoon dialogue will begin with initial thoughts from two field practitioners who have engaged with networks. They will speak about the capabilities that have been significant to mobilize the network for collective action, perform and adapt over time and in their context. They will be invited to explore what is distinctive about capabilities in networks (e.g. how leadership is exercised, what gives legitimacy, etc. in context). Their initial thoughts will be followed by open dialogue

14:30   Break

15:00   2) Small group discussion/ parallel workshops (1.5 hours)

Each workshop will draw upon practitioners' experience to explore unique features of networks as a form of social organization. Workshops A) and B) may be merged (TBD) Invited guests include:
- *Gleyse Peiter/Andre Spitz/John Saxby, (COEP)*
- *Dr. Francisco Campos/Volker Hauck (Observatorio)*
- *Dr.   Akwetey (Institute for Democratic Governance in Ghana)*
- *Sarah Earl, IDRC*
- *Others to be confirmed*

Possible topics for the workshops are:

A) Generative capacity. Networks are unique forms of social organization that generate capacity that is greater than the sum of its parts, building on and connecting capabilities that exist in a system to address complex development issues in an uncertain environment. This workshop will seek to deepen participants' understanding of what this may mean in practice and key factors (design principles?) that come into play for generative capacity to develop in networks e.g. capacity utilisation around a unifying purpose, distinctive aspects of leadership, mutually reinforcing 'ingredients" to the capacity mix, etc.

B) Adaptive Capacity: Networks are forms of social organization that have unique capacity to adapt to opportunities and challenges of a complex and uncertain environment. What does it mean to have adaptive capacity?   How do networks adapt to the evolution in the environment? What capabilities are needed for a network to respond and adapt over time to changes in the environment and still achieve its purpose for example: roles of actors (leaders, knowledge gatherers, specialists, etc.), types and mix of purposeful activities (learning, advocacy, social action), structuring (informal - formal) and decision making (locus of decision making and governance) at given point in the development of networks.

C) Managing informal relationships and formal structure as forms of capacity
over time
Issues for exploration in this workshop may include, among others: a) dynamics of informal relationships as a form of capacity; b) choices about formal structure and governance over time as the network adapts to opportunities and challenges in the environment; c) challenges and tensions inherent in making those choices; d) capabilities needed in secretariats to 'manage" the network CD and the dynamic interplay between secretariat and network members, etc.

16:30   Break – coffee

16:45 Plenary feedback – key insights from the workshops discussions

17:30 Wrap up and Adjourn

19:00 Dinner hosted by SNV and ECDPM (Restaurant Zebedeus, Rond de Kerk 8, Centre, The Hague. Tel: 070-346 83 93)

<u>**Wednesday, September 21, 2005**</u>

8:45 Coffee

9:00 Take stock of insights from previous day
Faciltated by Suzanne Taschereau

10:00 Implications for addressing capacity issues in networks: mindsets
Dialogue in the large group … following up on specific issues and
questions that emerged on the previous day, including

♦ *Reflections on adopting an eco-systems mindset and its implications for understanding capacities required to support change and performance in an increasingly complex and uncertain world.*

♦ *Understanding the possibilities and challenges of funding agencies - network partnerships and interface: what are the issues (e.g. managing polarities and tensions between: flexibility and structure, emerging/adaptive activities in responses to the environment vs. planning for accountability for results, etc).*

10:30 Break

11:00 Dialogue continues…
Wrap up with some tentative conclusions (or clearer questions and ideas) on enriching our Conceptual Frameworks

12:30 Lunch

13:30 Implications for addressing capacity issue in networks: methods
Parallel workshops/ small group dialogue
Exploration of issues, challenges and possibilities

*1) **Assessing Capacity***

*2) **Strategic interventions***

*3) **Monitoring and evaluation: for learning and for accountability***.

14:30 Break

15:00 Dialogue continues… Plenary feedback and discussion
Wrap up with tentative conclusions (or clearer questions and ideas)

16:00 Wrap up
Participants are invited to provide a last comment, reflection, word of advice

17.00 Adjourn

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Annex 2: 'Networks and Capacity' - Annotated Bibliography

Darcy Ashman. ***Towards a More Effective Collaboration in NGO Networks for Social Development. Lessons Learned from the NGO Network for Health Project and Framework for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.*** Unpublished research paper.

> Reviews seven key factors that permit learning and organizational improvement in networks: 1) pre-existing social capital; 2) strategic fit (goals address needs and issues perceived as significant to participants and stakeholders, methodology based on successful model, project represents meaningful value added to organizational portfolio of each partner, complementary functional roles); 3) donor relations (financial resources, support to facilitate growth of genuine joint agendas and autonomy, mechanisms for relating, mutual accountability; 4) leadership commitment; 5) shared control in governance and management; 6) mutual trust (develops or weakens with confidence that each will carry out agreements with quality); 7) joint learning. The author also critically reviews and challenges assumptions about planning and evaluation that involve funders and networks.

Anne K. Bernard. ***IDRC Networks: An Ethnographic Perspective***. IDRC 1996.

> A review focusing on knowledge networks – interactive research and capacity development networks- how they strengthen and sustain capacity. The author analyzes factors of network performance, conditions of successes and causes of failure. It explores risks associated with networks and mitigating factors. It offers conclusions on links to endogenous capacity and adaptation to challenging environments, and on network evaluation.

Fritjof Capra. ***The Hidden Connection. A Science for Sustainable Living***. Anchor Book, Random House. January 2004

> Capra views organizations as living, social systems of communities of practice. He suggests that an increasing number of private sector firms are structured as networks, and inter-organizational and global networks of networks as an emergent and flexible response to the complexity of the environment. Capra explores the link between emergent informal structuring of networks and the more formal structures

Michael Carley and Ian Christie. ***Managing Sustainable Development***. Second Edition. Easthscan Publications, London. 2000

> A fascinating book that view networks as a form of capacity that emerge in response to constraints to improved human resource management and organizational capacity for sustainable development. Case studies illustrate an action network approach to environmental management at a number of levels: constituency; partnerships between government, business, NGOs and community groups; groups of natural scientists and public administrators; and multi layered nested global networks.

Madeleine Church et al. ***Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change: New Thinking on Evaluating the Work of International Networks***. Development Planning Unit, University College of London, DFID Working paper no. 121, 2002

> This paper is the product of collective reflection by 9 coordinators of networks and movements advocating for social change. They explore tools for holistic thinking about networks. They argue that evaluation should focus on the relational and process outcomes of networks, and explore methods for evaluation emerging from participatory research including: contribution assessments (assessing reasonable expectations of performance) and participatory story building. .

Francisco Eduardo de Campos (NESCOM) and Volker Hauck (ECDPM). ***Networking collaboratively: The Brazilian Observatorio on Human Resources in Health.*** EDCPM. Draft discussion paper, July 2005.

> Case study of a state- non state knowledge network to feed into public health policy formulation. Draws on ECDPM study, on Engel and Liebler and Ferri for conceptual framework. Explore the

dynamic mix of capabilities over time.

Rick Davies. ***Network Perspectives in the Evaluation of Development Interventions: More than a Metaphor.*** EDAIS Conference paper – New Directions in Impact Assessment for Develoment Interventions: Methods and Practice.

> Reviews a range of methods for evaluation of development interventions: social network analysis, methods for describing – 'seeing' networks, how networks can be analyzed and evaluated through qualitative methods e.g. mapping of actors and their relations, setting of and reviewing milestones, developing story lines

Sarah Earl, Fred Carden and Terry Smutylo. ***Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs.*** IDRC, 2001.

> Alternative methods for planning, monitoring and evaluation outcomes of development interventions in fluid contexts and forms of organization such as networks.

Paul Engel and Arin van Zee. ***Networking for learning – what can donors do?***

> Defines networks/networking, outlines four types of activities that characterize civil society networking, explore fundamental drivers behind the interest in networking, factors of effectiveness, role of donors – why and how to invest.

Sakiko Fukura-Parr, Carlos Lopes and Khalid Malik*. **Capacity Development – New Solutions for our Problems.*** Earthscan/ UNDP, 2001.

> Chap 2.3 Gustabo Lins Ribeiro. ***Power, Networks and Ideology in the Field of Development*** Focus is on large scale infrastructure project networks and on planned interventions and coalitions of institutional actors in large scale projects. Points to the strengths of networks (pragmatic and fluid) and the weakness of those strengths: come into tension with regularity, stability, rational planning and foresight needed for development interventions leading to eventually become institutions.

> Chap 3. Sakiko Fukura Parr and Ruth Hill. ***The Network Age: Creating new models for technical cooperation.*** Focus is on knowledge networks and communities of practice. (p.196). Global knowledge networks are made possible because of internet technology (the information/network age). Examples are provided: UNDP (Internal Subregional Resource Facility systems (SURF), the World Bank (Global Development Network) and networks among Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. The authors suggest that the network structures alter the types of capacity needed i.e. they require more specialized skills, adaptability an flexibility, science and technology based knowledge, skills and training + capacity to negotiate rules and participate in global networks. They also offer some 'design principles' for effective knowledge networks.

Steven Goldsmith and William D. Eggers, ***Governing by Network. The New Shape of the Public Sector.*** Brookings Institution Press. Washington DC. 2004. (Innovations in American Government, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University)

> Explores initiatives by governments and the private sector in the US that use a networked model of organizing service provision to accomplish a public service– a means of accessing and coordinating structured service delivery and production in sectors such as parks and forest management, law enforcement, disease control and prevention. The authors focus on the management of networks: factors that determine governments' choice of governance model (network or hierarchical); capacities needed in successful networks; leveraging existing structures and institutions vs. doing to affect major systemic change; means to build relationships – governance structures, factors that build good partnerships and resolving the accountability dilemma

Mark Granovetter. ***The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited.*** Sociological Theory, Volume 1 (1983) 201-233.

> Granovetter's fundamental theory is that "weak ties" - connections with people and perspective

that are different, outside the boundaries of the usual strong personal and organizational relationships through "bridges" is an important factor for innovation and development. Weak ties provide people with access to information and resources beyond those available in individuals', communities' and organizations' circles (critical in knowledge networks). The author also reviews studies that indicate the role and possible weakness of 'strong ties" of reciprocity that are more prevalent among the poor and marginalized, as an adaptive response to economic and political pressures. He suggests that strong ties among elites are more effective for decision making and information flow (speed of flow, credibility and especially influence).

Liisa Horelli. *Network Evaluation from the Everyday Life Perspective – A tool for Capacity Building and Voice*. A Paper presented at the Fifth Conference of the European Evaluation Society, Seville Spain. October 2002.

Drawing on complex adaptive system theory as a basis, the author offers a variety of methods adapted to assess the dynamic development of networks: mapping of actors, stories of dynamic of interaction and change over time (longitudinal perspective), and analytic assessment of learning and Capacity development (the latter is limited to training and learning dimensions). She invites readers to be clear about their purpose: evaluation for development, for accountability and/or for knowledge and identifies issues for each.

Claudia Liebler and Marissa Ferri . '*NGO Networks: Building Capacity in a Changing World' Study Supported by Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation.* USAID, November, 2004

Focuses on contributions of networks to building the organizational capacities of members. Reviews types of networks, characteristics of effective networks, network formation, benefits of networks, etc. Most interesting is a framework for contemporary capacities for NGO excellence which includes *standard capacities* (technical performance, internal and external (creation of partnerships, networks and linkages) and **generative capacities** (ability to work across traditional boundaries, learn how to learn, lead in new ways, develop systems views, access the potential of technology, act with agility, balance autonomy with interdependence, manage cooperation and competition, and align organizational form with purpose. They conclude that networks are ideally suited toward building generative capacities.

Sanghamitra Mahanty. *Conservation and Development Interventions as Networks : The Case of the India Ecodevelopment Project, Karnaraka*. *World Development*, Vol 30, No. 8 pp. 1369-1386. 2002.

The paper explores integrated conservation and development projects through an "actor lens". The author suggests that managing projects as networks of actors implies using different tools and instruments e.g. identification and mapping of the complex web of actors and linkages around a project, and to the process of identifying negotiating and establishing a network among key actors s a central part of the intervention vs. a secondary annoyance in the achievement of goals.

Helen McCarthy, Paul Miller and Paul Skidmore (Eds). *Network Logic. Who governs in an inter-connected world?* Demos, 2004.

A collection of article by leading thinkers in the area of networks. Of particicular interest to those interested in networks and capabilities are
Chap 7. *Leading Between: Six characteristics of network leaders*
Chap 11 *Developing the well-connected community*
Available on line at www.demons.co.uk

Kate Meagher. *' Social Capital or Analytical Liability? Social Networks and African Informal Economies.'* Queen Elizabeth House. University of Oxford.

Reviews the various approaches in the social capital literature as applied to networks. The author warns that, in the fascination with abstract concepts of trust and solidarity, connections and flows, crucial questions need to be asked about the limitations of the social capital perspective. Critical network research in organization theory and political economy are useful to advancing network thinking to an institutional problematic that focuses on how the regulatory

capacities of networks are shaped by institutional practices embedded in particular networks and the nature of their linkages with the wider society: She suggests that social networks are not defined by their autonomy from states but are critically shaped by the nature of their relationship with the state at the local as well as the national levels, and that they are shaped not only by their institutional legacies but by their ability to respond to change.

Peter Morgan, Tony Land and Heather Baser. *Study on Capacity, Change and Performance. Interim Report.* ECDPM Synthesis Paper, April 2005

Peter Morgan. *The Idea and Practice of Systems Thinking and their Relevance for Capacity Development.* Discussion paper. ECDPM. March 2005

D. Parthasarathy and V.K. Chopde. *Building Social Capital: Collective Action, Adoption of Agricultural Innovations and Poverty Reduction in the Indian Semi-Arid Tropics*.   Unpublished paper.

> Approaches to capacity assessment (appreciative inquiry), and for planning and M&E when dealing with networks for social change

Richard Portes and Stephen Yeo. *Think Net: The CEPR Model for a Research Network*. April 2001.
> Drivers and motivations (connecting capacities to generate capabilities to address complex problems) and what distinguishes networks as a form of capacity (responsiveness and capacity utilization)

Kenneth Prewitt, Ed. *Networks in International Capacity Building: Cases from Sub-Saharan Africa.* Social Science Research Council Working Paper Series, NY 1998

> Report from materials prepared for and discussion from a working conference convened by the African Economic Research Consortium (Nairobi), the Rockefeller Foundation and the Social Science Research Council. Focuses on knowledge networks in Africa, drivers for their creation, characteristics that attract and hold the attention of researchers, relative added value to members (ref. "generative capacity" of the research and training system) and sustainability.

Claudia Ranaboldo and Pinzas. *United We Stand : A Study about Networks involved in Sustainable Development.* ICCO

> Research into evolution of NGOs networks in Latin America (different from Africa). Uses the framework by Engel – with a classification of five types of activities (vs. the 3 referred to by Volker), and exploration of 7 elements that influence networks in a positive way: pertinence; sustainability; added value (specialization, mutual learning and advocacy; strengthened institutions and new critical mass for collective action; structure, participation and management; decentralization as social capital; qualified, responsible and committed participation. The article is relevant and useful for looking into issues of capacity utilization.

John Saxby. *COEP - Comite de Entidades no Comate à Fome e pela Vida : Mobilizing against hunger and for life : An analysis of capacity and change in a Brazilian network*. Case study prepared the project 'Capacity, Change and Performance', Discussion Paper no 57C, October 2004.

> Examines a Brazilian social solidarity network that includes government agencies, parastatals and organizations of the private sector and civil society, through the lens of organizational and social capacity and change. The case study explores the stages of development of the network, as well and the capabilities that have made COEP work over time.

Mia Sorgenfrei and Rebecca Wrigley. *Building Analytical and Adaptive Capacities
for Organisational Effectiveness* INTRAC, May 2005 (Draft)

> Highlights the importance of analytical and adaptive capacities in an increasingly complex works, particularly in civil society organizations. The article defines these types of capacities and link analysis with adaptation.

Stephen Yeo. *Creating, Managing and Sustaining Policy Research Networks*. Preliminary paper. Centre for Economic Policy Research, London. May 2004

The author reviews the functions and roles networks policy networks play: filter, amplifier, investor, facilitator, convenor and community builder. He explores choices and trade-offs in intervening in networks, and suggests that international funders need to develop their own capabilities to support networks at various levels. The author outlines some of the challenges for evaluating policy research networks and suggests approaches.

International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

- Publications of relevance to networks and capacity which are available on line at www.idrc.ca

  Chapter 3. *What do Networks do?* A primer on Global Policy Networks
  Chapter 4. *Network Management.* Exploration of key issues: a) getting the network off the ground through leadership and a common vision; b) balancing consultation and goal delivery; c) securing sustainable funding; d) finding allies outside the sector, and e) tackling the dual challenge of inclusion (North-South and local-global)

  Annual Learning Forum (ALF) May 2005. Article on: Contexts for policy influence, Insights for IDRC supporting networks in different policy context, Network sustainability, How have IDRC policies and practices influenced the sustainability of networks?

Annex 3: Workshop Presentation on Networks and Capacity

'Networks and Capacity' A Draft Discussion Paper

ECDPM Study on Capacity, Change and Performance

Growth of networks

➤ Response to complex problems which require linking & mobilizing social actors in networks
➤ Growth in networks facilitated by access to information technology

➤ Has led to extensive literature on networks

Capacity and Networks

➤ Less explored ... little grounded empirical work on capacity and networks

➤ Concern: conceptual frameworks and intervention repertoires to analyse and support capacity development in networks inadequate

Purpose: Contribute to understanding of networks & capacity issues

➤ What is a network?
➤ Why do networks emerge?
➤ What capabilities make them work and how do they develop over time?
➤ What implications for addressing capacity issues in networks and for choices of intervention strategies?

An iterative process....

➤ The paper is not a comprehensive review & analysis
➤ A basis for discussion and further exploration with practitioners to ground the discussion
➤ The workshop: an opportunity for deeper reflection and appreciative inquiry

What is a network?

Many definitions, common features:
➤ A group of individuals and/or organizations
➤ With a common concern or interest
➤ Who contribute knowledge, experience and/or resources for shared learning, joint action or to achieve a shared purpose

Networks: Different Forms

➤ More or less formalized social arrangements that evolve over time
➤ Includes communities of practice, solidarity networks, coalitions & alliances involving actors in civil society, private sector and/or the state

Typology of Networks

1. Purpose or motivation
2. Types of activities
3. Functions performed and roles played
4. Levels of intervention
5. Who is being networked
6. Structure
➤ Usefulness and limitations of typologies

Why do networks emerge?

➤ increase access to information, expertise and financial resources
➤ increase efficiency and impact
➤ respond more effectively to complex realities
➤ increase visibility, develop shared practices, mitigate risks, reduce isolation and increase credibility
➤ share learning, strengthen advocacy capacity

Endogenous factors...

➤ Pre-existing relationships among like-minded individuals and organizations who are motivated to learn and act together
➤ Opening of political space
➤ Leadership, vision, credibility and legitimacy

External factors

➤ Access to external resources (e.g. funding, means of communication)
➤ Facilitating exchange and bringing isolated actors together

➤ Dynamic interplay of internal and external factors

How are networks distinct?

➤ Voluntary coming together of individuals or organizations
➤ Flexible structures
➤ Fluid and organic: adapt to changes in environment, opportunities and member needs
➤ Negotiated order and shared accountability among members

What capabilities required to make networks work?

Four areas of organizational and network capabilities:

> External capabilities
> Internal capabilities
> Technical capabilities
> Generative, or "soft" capabilities

Key capabilities required to make networks work?

- **Generative capabilities** – work across boundaries, learn how to learn, lead in new ways, systems view, act with agility, align form with purpose

- **Adaptive capabilities:** to strategically adjust thinking and actions in response to changing circumstances based on improved knowledge and understanding

Emergence and Development of Capabilities in Networks... Issues for exploration

> History and context
> Nature of relationships
> Governance arrangements
> Sector/thematic orientation, region
> Managing tensions between accountability requirements and emergent approaches

Implications for Practice

> **Shift of mindset:** systems perspective, looking for synergies, shared responsibility and accountability
> **Shift in approach:** avoid blueprint strategies, long-term, adopt qualitative approaches e.g. assessment

Questions

1. Do networks represent a distinct 'form of capacity'?
2. Why do networks emerge: motivators, contextual & capacity factors?
3. What makes networks work over time: what types of capabilities or combinations are needed?
4. What implications for practice?

What we mean by capacity

> Competencies (individual)
> Capabilities (collective)
> Capacity (overall ability of a system to perform)

The **European Centre for Development Policy Management** (ECDPM) aims to improve international cooperation between Europe and countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

Created in 1986 as an independent foundation, the **Centre's objectives** are:

- to enhance the capacity of public and private actors in ACP and other low-income countries; and
- to improve cooperation between development partners in Europe and the ACP Region.

The Centre focuses on **four interconnected themes**:

- Actors of Partnerships
- ACP-EU Trade Relations
- Political Dimensions of Partnerships
- Internal Donor Reform

The Centre collaborates with other organisations and has a network of contributors in the European and the ACP countries. Knowledge, insight and experience gained from process facilitation, dialogue, networking, infield research and consultations are widely shared with targeted ACP and EU audiences through international conferences, focussed briefing sessions, electronic media and key publications.