



Study on Capacity, Change and Performance

Networks and Capacity

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

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1 Introduction

Increasingly, we live in a world of networks. This is having a profound impact on the way we organize at local, national and international levels (Church et al, 2002). The growth of networks as an organizational 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 technology (ICTs) which has 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 organizational form.

Networks have existed for millennia, bringing together the poor and marginalized, 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 organizations with a shared interest in exchanging ideas, generating knowledge or mobilizing capacity for collective action.

Development practitioners have increasingly recognized 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, program-based approaches and governing by networks¹. What has been much less explored in the development literature is the link between capacity issues and networks.

Much of the enthusiasm about networks in civil society organizations, governments and international development agencies is rooted in a belief that the capacity of networks is somehow greater than the sum of its parts. The basic assumption is that networks can mobilize or generate capacity and have an impact on change processes which is greater than that which could be achieved by individuals or organizations 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 analyze and support capacity development in networks, which are drawn substantially from the organizational development literature, are inadequate for understanding and making choices about intervention strategies and for evaluating capacity in networks.

The purpose of this paper is to:

- (1) contribute to the conceptual understanding of capacity and capacity development in relation to networks: what distinguishes networks from other organizational forms; what capabilities are needed to make networks work effectively, and how these capabilities develop over time.
- (2) explore some of the implications for addressing capacity issues in networks, including choices of intervention strategies.

¹ Stephen Goldsmith and William D. Eggers. *Governing by Networks: The New Shape of the Public Sector*, 2004.

This is one of five theme papers prepared under the European Centre for Development Policy Management's (ECDPM) study on *Capacity, Change and Performance*². 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 (September 20, 2005). The workshop brought together practitioners with a broad range of network experiences in different contexts and with an interest in capacity issues.³ 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.

2 What is distinctive about networks as an organizational form?

2.1 Networking and networks

There are many definitions of networks in the literature, most of which share certain common characteristics while emphasizing particular aspects, e.g. purpose, form, 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, 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-organizational coalition to develop. (*Carley & Christie, 2002*)
- Networks are emergent phenomena that occur when organizations 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-organizational forms are referred to as coalitions, alliances, strategic alliance networks, consortia and partnerships (*Milward and Provan, 2003*)

² 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) and has received funding from seven international organizations, as well as from several national organisations involved in field cases carried out as part of the larger study." In addition to the five theme papers, the study includes 18 cases from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean – see www.ecdpm.org/dcc/capacitystudy for details. The other theme papers are on: 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.

³ For more information on the workshop see Zinke, J. 2005. *Networks as a Form of Capacity - Workshop report*. Networks Workshop, Maastricht, 20-21 September 2005. Mimeo, available at www.ecdpm.org/dcc/capacitystudy

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 organizations
- 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
- 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, but rather focuses on social, economic and cultural networks with a public purpose, principally those engaged in or supporting developing country interests.

Networks have been categorized 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 & Ferri, 2004)
- *Level(s) of intervention or collaboration*: local community, organizational, inter-organizational, sectoral, national, regional, global or multi-layered 'nested networks' that integrate efforts from local to global. (Carlie 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-organizational 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 specialized network 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 specialized 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 organizational 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, organizational, inter-organizational, sector-wide, national, regional, global and multi-layered 'nested networks' that integrate efforts from local to global. (Carlie & Cristie, 2000). Yet they share certain characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of human organization. (see Table 1 on next page)

Table 1: Networks and Organizations

Networks	Organizations
<p>Are constituted through voluntary association of individuals and/or organizations to advance an issue or purpose. Members join, participate in, or leave a network based on their perception of its value-added: exchange of knowledge or practices, increased capacity to affect change, etc.</p> <p>The relationship among members is fundamentally a social contract.</p>	<p>Are mandated by a governing body, shareholders or members to achieve organizational goals and objectives.</p> <p>While employees and managers may value the organization's goals and objectives, the contractual relationship is fundamentally legal and/or financially based.</p>
<p>Negotiated order and reciprocal accountability. 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 organizational forms.⁴</p>	<p>Hierarchical order and accountability to Executives, Boards of Governors and shareholders, Ministers, etc. is a key feature of organizations. Authority for decision making and accountability ultimately rests at the top.</p>
<p>Networks are fluid and organic: Networks emerge, grow, adapt to achieve their purpose, to respond to members' needs and to opportunities and challenges in the environment.</p> <p>Their trajectories and results are not easily predictable.</p>	<p>Organizations have codified functions & roles, and routinized practices (job descriptions, policies, rules and procedures, standard operating manuals, strategic and operational plans, etc), that allow them to deliver products and services with a relatively high level of predictability.</p>
<p>Informal structuring of relationships 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 & experience (workshops, conferences, web-sites), joint project work, etc.</p> <p>Too limited structuring or formalization of arrangements can limit the potential of a network, while too much structure risks stifling energy and innovation.⁵</p> <p>While networks are self-organizing, to a certain extent, most require a coordinator or secretariat, however small to support them.</p>	<p>Formal organizational structuring of work is important in organizations, and much time is devoted to getting the structure right.</p> <p>In <i>Structuring of Organizations</i>, Mintzberg⁶ suggests that organizations 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 organization 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 non governmental organizations.</p>

Two other characteristics distinguish networks as an organizational form:

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

⁴ Church et al, 2002, p.21.

⁵ HIV and Development Programme & UNAIDS, 2000:28, from Church et al., 2002

⁶ Mintzberg, Henry. *The Structuring of Organizations*, 1979

These defining characteristics of networks and organizations provide a basis for exploring the different logic that animates networks. They offer some clues as to why individuals and/or organizations 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 organizations or institutions. They also give some sense of the challenges that may arise in managing the interface between networks and organizations 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 organizations 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 organizations display at least some 'network-like' characteristics e.g. Cisco Systems⁷, while some formal networks look like organizations with well established management and governance structures e.g. The Brazilian *Observatorio on Human Resources in Health* and the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*.

The authors also recognize 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 doesn't 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 formalized inter-organizational 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 formalize 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 networks is greater than the sum of the parts, then network capacity and performance cannot be understood or fostered simply by making sure that each component does its part. Following from Morgan (2006⁸), we adopt a system 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)⁹. Their survival depends on their capacity to change, to learn from experience and to adapt to their environment.

⁷ Cisco (CSCO) is a leading supplier of networking equipment & network management for the Internet.

⁸ Morgan, Peter, *Ways of Thinking about Capacity*, EDCPM, May 2006.

⁹ Hall, Richard H. *Organizations – Structures, Processes and Outcomes*, Prentice Hall, 2002

Evidence suggests that effective and sustainable networks have the potential to self-organize and to create new structures and new ways of relating and mobilizing 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 formalized 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 behavior 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 the study of living systems (biology, anthropology, sociology, economics, management and information technology), complexity science is well suited to explain some of the distinctive properties of networks (e.g. emergence) and some of the paradoxes (e.g. inter-dependence among actors who can also act independently, collaboration to achieve shared goals and competition of ideas and perspectives to foster learning, innovation and adaptation).¹⁰ 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 the 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, 2004¹¹

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 marginalization in the political process (Granovetter, 1983)¹². Midwives, craftsmen and other practitioners formed networks to share knowledge and experience, to support innovation and to develop their professions or trades. Etienne Wenger (1998) was the first author to explore these networks of practitioners and the more modern networks that have since emerged. He called these types of networks 'communities of practice'.¹³ According to Wenger, a community of practice defines itself along three dimensions:

¹⁰ Brenda Zimmerman, Curt Lindberg and Paul Plsek. *Edgework: Insights from Complexity Science for Health Care Leaders*. VHA Inc. Texas 1998

¹¹ Stephenson, Karen. *Towards a Theory of Government*. Chapter 3 in *Network Logic*. Demos, 2004. Page. 40.

¹² Granovetter, Mark, *The Strength of Loose Ties*. 1983.

¹³ Wenger, E. 'Communities of Practice Learning as a social system', published in the *Systems Thinker*, June 1998, <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/lss.shtml>.

- *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;
- *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 that 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 organizing, others are institutionally supported. As with their historical antecedents, these communities of practice respond to social and professional interests, connecting practitioners within organizations and across organizational boundaries to exchange knowledge and experience, to enrich their practice and to address new and emerging challenges. As noted, their development has been propelled by increasingly sophisticated 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 Robert Putnam and others have discussed as **social capital**¹⁴. They constitute a kind of 'bank account' of relationships nurtured by trust that members can draw upon and that holds the potential for mobilizing assets collectively to achieve a common purpose, thus increasing their capacity.

3.2 Why networks emerge: Motivations and drivers

Individuals and organizations 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 & Willard (2001) suggest that some of the key drivers for the emergence of knowledge networks include:

- *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, marginalization of research endeavors and lack of impact on public policy
- *Possibilities afforded by information and communications technology (ICT)*

Case studies and examples from the ECDPM study illustrate these points (see Box below)

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. It 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.

¹⁴ Putnam, Robert. *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton University Press. 1993

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

Civil society actors create or join networks to increase access to information, expertise and financial resources, to increase efficiency, to increase visibility of issues, develop shared practices, mitigate risks, reduce isolation and increase credibility. Other motivators include: the opportunities to share learning, strengthen advocacy capacity, respond more effectively to complex realities and scale up impact. (Liebler & Ferri, 2004 and Engel, 2005)

Parthasarathy and Chopde (2000) have underlined as well the importance of collective action through networks to the uptake of new technologies - e.g. relating to watershed and irrigation management, integrated pest and disease management - by overcoming problems of 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 organizations or individuals embrace a collaborative process, engage in shared learning, 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 organizations 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 recognize their interdependence and where collective capabilities are needed to address increasingly complex issues e.g. environmental and natural resource management, health pandemics, economic development, trade agreements, protocols for information technology, and others. The realization 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.¹⁵

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 has joined forces to promote adherence to international labor 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.

¹⁵ While these examples are all taken from the literature on global networks, note that none are actually called networks: they are rather referred to as a programme, an initiative, an association, and even a Commission. Only a closer, more in-depth examination of how these arrangements actually work would allow us to determine the extent to which they actually function as networks.

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.

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 organizations, 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 had a budget of \$25 million in 2000.

Driven by a need to access specialized expertise and to increase flexibility to deliver a range of services to the public, governments are also creating network-like partnership arrangements with organizations from the private sector and civil society in sectors such as parks and forest management, law enforcement, and disease control and prevention.¹⁶

3.3 How networks emerge: A dynamic interplay of factors

Case examples reviewed for this paper revealed that each network emerged through a convergence of factors and conditions that catalyzed 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 of political space.
- *Individuals and/or organizations with some expertise, skills and/or resources.* The emergence of many networks can often 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 to build on.
- *Leadership* with vision, credibility, legitimacy to convene and mobilize actors to collaborate in pursuit of that vision.
- *External interventions* that galvanize (or entice) 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); creation of space for dialogue and facilitation of exchange of ideas among otherwise isolated individuals and organizations (through conferences and workshops); seed funding.

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

For example, many networks in Latin America have their origins in the social movements of the 1960s (Ranaboldo & Pinzas, 2003). In Brazil, the fight against dictatorship led to a movement in favor of democratic, participatory and decentralized structures. Initially grounded in solidarity networks of intellectuals and practitioners committed to social justice

¹⁶ Goldsmith, Stephen 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).

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 specialization. The emergence of these networks in Brazil was galvanized by leaders with vision, legitimacy and credibility. (de Campos & Hauck, 2005).

The circumstances which led to the emergence of the African networks reviewed for this paper were different than the Brazilian situation described above. For example, policy research networks in Sub-Saharan Africa have been described as products of the institutional crisis 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 conducive environment which 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. For example, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) 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 Organization (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 recognize the potential for increasing their capacity beyond that which they could achieve on their own through creation of or joining a network. The capabilities that make networks work effectively to fulfill 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 its members. While this is clearly important, less consideration has been given to what is distinct or different about the capacity of networks (compared to other organizational forms) or the capabilities required to make networks function effectively.

4.1 Capabilities and capacity to perform

In a recent report on *Capacity, Change and Performance*, Morgan et al. (2005¹⁷) have 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 organization 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
- Organizations 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. mobilizing and engaging actors to collaborate towards a shared purpose across organizational boundaries, creating collective meaning and identity, managing tensions between collaboration and competition)
- **Capacity** refers to the overall ability of a system to perform and sustain itself.

In his more recent work, 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 networks, 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 recognize these capabilities, support their development and ensure the value added 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 analysis by IDRC¹⁸ and UNDP (2000)¹⁹ 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 categorized in 4

¹⁷ Morgan, P., Land T. and Baser, H. *Study on Capacity, Change and Performance*. Interim report. ECDPM Synthesis Paper, April 2005, Maastricht.

¹⁸ See Bernard, Anne K., 'IDRC Networks: An Ethnographic Perspective', IDRC, 1996 http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26858-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html and Yeo, 2004

¹⁹ UNDP HIV and Development Program. *Networks for Development. Lessons Learned from Supporting National and Regional Networks on Legal, Ethical and Human Rights Dimensions of HIV/AIDS*, October 2000

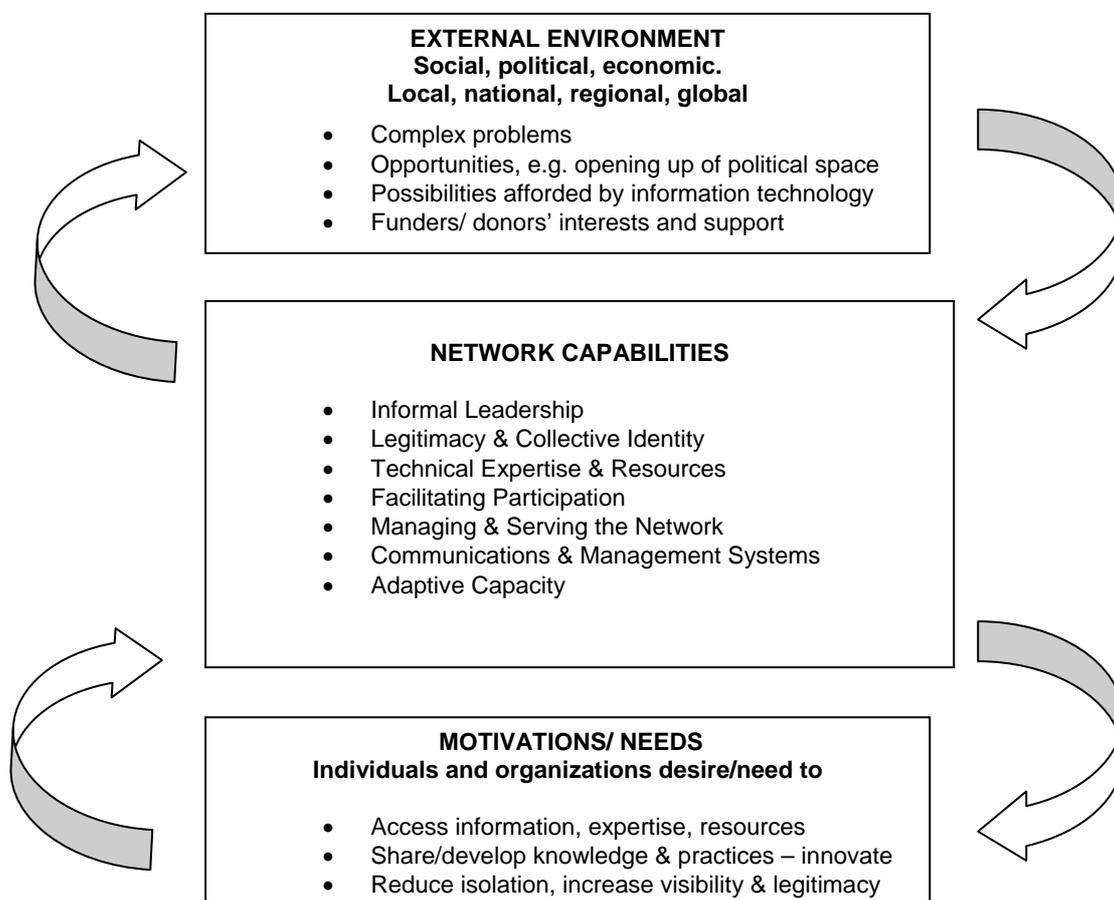
areas: external, internal, technical and generative or 'soft' capabilities.

For the purposes of this paper, we have chosen to focus on a more limited set of capabilities (collective attributes, skills, abilities and expertise) – listed below – that vibrant, effective networks tend to have. Our intent therefore 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 be needed for any given network, depending on the context, the purpose of the network and a host of other factors.

Figure 1 below 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 networks purpose, 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, member needs and the environment over time.

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



Informal Leadership

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

- Articulating a vision and persuading individuals and organizations to work together to pursue particular ideas or new directions;
- Strategic thinking,²⁰ 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,
- Mobilizing, leveraging and managing human, material and financial resources to support network activity.

Participants of 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 organizations, 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 networks purpose and functions. A review of lessons learned from almost a decade's experience supporting national and regional HIV/AIDS networks²¹ 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 mobilizing constituencies.
- Networks undertaking specific tasks e.g. providing information, testing and counseling services for people who have been HIV tested, 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

²⁰ Henry Mintzberg. *Strategy Safari*. 1998.

²¹ UNDP HIV and Development Program *Networks for Development. Lessons Learned from Supporting National and Regional Networks on Legal, Ethical and Human Rights Dimensions of HIV/Aids*, October 2000.

(e.g. researchers and policy makers) or from different technical backgrounds (e.g. sociologists, engineers and natural scientists) – such as the Brazilian *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.

Networks reviewed for this study consistently relied on a core group of leaders with complementary 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 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 electrical 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 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 sustain the network.

Legitimacy and Collective Identity

Effective networks are good at connecting individuals across organizational, 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.

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)²² 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 challenge is figuring out how to sustain legitimacy amongst the diverse set of stakeholders, while striving to realize 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 diverse capabilities together, as well as its track record in realizing results. Legitimacy earned over time enhances the networks 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

²² Derick Brinkerhoff. *Organisational legitimacy, capacity and capacity development*. ECDPM Discussion Paper 58A, June 2005.

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 1,000 institutions which include a great number of highly qualified and committed scientists and environmentalists.

Networks protect their operating space and legitimize 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 organizations 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 organizations with individual but no collective legitimacy to speak on behalf of civil society. Developing a collective identity and adopting a recognizable name – the *Growth and Poverty Forum* - increased their legitimacy to secure a seat at the table with policy makers.
- *Carefully avoiding partisan political positions* – to maintain autonomy, legitimacy and acceptance by different political actors, and to protect the network from shifting political winds or from capture by narrow interests.
- *Maintaining a close connection to members and their realities* - as networks grow, adopting a decentralized 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 to network legitimacy and effectiveness.

Access to technical knowledge and expertise is an important attractor for members and 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 organizations/institutions, 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 which 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 organizations who recognize the potential for enhancing their own capacity and/or impact through collaboration.

Box 6: Tapping into technical expertise

COEP invited entities to use their organizational 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 marginalized 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 mobilizing technical expertise, networks need to be able to mobilize and leverage financial and organizational resources in order to encourage new ideas and coordination, and to support weaker members who rely on the network for project funds.

Box 7: Mobilizing 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 para-statal 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 emphasized the importance of Furnas’ initiative, which encouraged others to join.” (Saxby, 2004, p. 3)

While some networks are able to mobilize technical, financial and organizational 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 her review of evaluations of HIV/AIDS networks, Bernard (2000) 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 is 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)” (p.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 networks’ 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 decentralized governance arrangements. Others establish advisory groups on specific issues or programs 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 networks purpose and see their engagement as adding value, or having 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.

A 1996 review of IDRC-sponsored policy research networks²³ 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 realize 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. However, if well handled, those differences can be explored and negotiated through joint activities, which can build trust and open up potential for new learning, accommodation of new ideas and adoption of new practices.

²³ Anne Bernard. *IDRC Networks: An Ethnographic Perspective*. Evaluation Unit, Sept. 1996

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. However, as networks grow, they often reach the limits of capacity they can mobilize 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 members, to administer seed money, or to document and share collective knowledge and experiences.

According to Aban Kabraji, CEO of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)²⁴ Asia Region, the growth and development of networks 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
- 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 networks 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 & Hauck, 2005*)

The secretariat works with members to frame network priorities, then mobilizes 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 which can help to refine goals and priorities.

While hierarchical organizations 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 operationalize 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 program.*

²⁴ Kabraji, A. *IUCN - Asia Region - Managing Capacity Development as a Change Process*. Presentation given at the 'Final Workshop on the Study on Capacity, Change and Performance', Maastricht, 15-17 May 2006, available at www.ecdpm.org/capacitystudy/final_workshop

- 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'²⁵, act as bottom line safeguards - 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* – a Steering Committee, 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 decentralized networks (e.g. COEP) alignment can be achieved through establishment of similar governance mechanisms and operating principles at both national and local levels.

Communications and management systems

Effective networks usually have significant capability to use information and communications technology (ICT) to facilitate rapid and broad-based interaction among members and with key stakeholders. Examples from large decentralized networks in big countries such as Brazil suggest that an electronic communications infrastructure – and especially the internet – have been very important to network growth and development. ICT is also essential for the effective functioning of regional and global networks.

List-serves and electronic fora may provide virtual spaces for rapid exchange of information and experience, and support on-going interaction 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 colleges²⁶ 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, face to face meetings increase motivation to use list-serves 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 ICT to sustain engagement beyond meetings.

Effective networks invest in knowledge management systems - data bases of information

²⁵ 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 are as follows:

- don't attempt to define the outcome of the behavior of the system in detail,
- provide local rules that can be applied by individual agents, or individual cases,
- have only a few such rules
- allow complex behavior 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. Then list the rules that you would reasonably expect to lead to that outcome.

Ref. Brenda Zimmerman, *Edgeware*, 1998, p. 161-162)

²⁶ Paul Brennan. *Not just another Listserve: The Contributions of ACCC Affinity Groups to Knowledge Exchange, Sectoral Initiatives and Innovation.* McGill McConnell Programme and The Association of Canadian Community Colleges. Monograph series October 2002

e.g. membership profiles, print and audio visual resources documentation of collective knowledge and results of network activity. 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, May 2005).

Vibrant networks demonstrate a keen ability to recognize 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 response to shifts in the environment or the evolving aspirations of their membership. The ECDPM cases, and examples provided by participants of the workshop in The Hague, illustrate the point:

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 decentralized network of networks structure.

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 personalized relationships that contributed to the network's early vitality and success. Formalizing of the network, its structure and (strategic & operational planning) processes is an adaptation which reflects the stage *Observatorio* is currently at in its life cycle.

As the examples above illustrate, effective networks have the capability to adapt, including to self-organize, create new structures and establish ways of relating and mobilizing 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 the Table in Annex A may seem to suggest a linear progression from informal to formal structure, evolution and growth of networks does not necessarily follow such a path, nor should it. However, in their enthusiasm to tap into and strengthen capabilities of networks, external intervenors too often push them into formalizing. 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 interest.

Network leaders and members often face difficult choices as they consider the trade-offs between the potential for capabilities gained, for example through formalizing 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 categorized 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 below).

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

Key ingredients include:

- A cook or gourmet describes 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 appetite: 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.
- *a shift in approach* – avoiding blueprint strategies, moving to long-term perspectives on change, and relying on more qualitative approaches e.g. for assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

Participants of the September 2005 SNV-UNDP-ECDPM workshop on networks and capacity underlined the need to think differently about capacity issues when dealing with networks, as compared to other organizational forms. Network characteristics which, 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 complexity requires a shift in perspective from individuals and organizations to relationships between actors, and to the inter-dependence 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 mobilizing for joint action, and; d) adjust and adapt structure while clearly pursuing a purpose and ensuring value added 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'* described differently as 'social contracts', 'contracts relating to membership', and the more formal 'contractual agreements' e.g. with funding agencies – each of which has implications for how the networks operate and what capabilities they require.
- *Volunteerism and commitment* – The fact that networks are voluntary associations of individuals and organizations means that they must be able to mobilize committed talent and respond to members' needs on an ongoing basis or risk losing them. Members who contribute their time, their 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 affect 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 design of supportive interventions.
- *Informal structuring and power.* Network managers, supportive consultants and donors need to be able to recognize, mobilize 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 organizations and organizational 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 exchange of knowledge and experience for innovation.
- Capability to mobilize, leverage and manage technical, organizational 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 organizations. Fundraising, financial management, monitoring and evaluation and learning systems and mechanisms are also critical for attracting and accounting for resources necessary for 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 – utilize and mobilize 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 experience and for joint activity.
- Accompany²⁷ the network – build on existing capabilities and support development of others.

Church et al (2002) also 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, that contribute to learning, sharing of experiences and ultimately improvements in practice.

Tools that are particularly suited to supporting capacity utilization and development of capacity in networks include:

- *Social Actor mapping*²⁸ 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 & informal leaders) may be represented in an 'inner circle', with a series of wider circles of interaction including less active members to be

²⁷ Accompaniment to develop capacity vs. 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.

²⁸ For a practical example on how social actor mapping has been used in a Conservation and Development Intervention, see Sanghamitra Mahantry. *Conservation and Development Interventions as Networks: The Case of India Ecodevelopment Project, Karnataka*. World Development, Vol 30, No. 8 pp. 1369-1386. 2002

mobilized, fellow travelers and potential contributors, and finally external stakeholders. Interaction lines provide a qualitative indication of interaction, rather than frequency.

- *Appreciative inquiry* (AI)²⁹ 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. AI involves asking questions and sharing stories about best experiences, contributing factors, core values, and wishes for the future. This and other assets-based approaches to capacity assessment (vs. the more deficit based approaches focusing on gap analysis) allow managers and consultants to identify and mobilize existing capabilities. Through story telling, network members name, and thus bring to a level of consciousness, capabilities that they can utilize and build on. AI also focuses on identifying positive potential and possibilities for the future, and is thus well suited to mobilize 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 specifications³⁰ 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. (ref. example in *Managing and Serving the Network*, section 4 of this paper)
- Horelli (2002)³¹ proposes an approach to planning and evaluation that is adapted to networks: it emphasizes 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, story-telling 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), Most Significant Change Technique (Dart & Davies, 2003) and Outcome Mapping (IDRC). Details on these approaches are included in Annex B.

5.2 Implications for funders

Participants in the September 2005 ECDPM-SVN-UNDP workshop in The Hague 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. LFAs) and measure success in relation to the attainment of clear, measurable results. The characterization of networks offered by workshop participants and reflected in this paper suggests a need for approaches which 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.

²⁹ Barrett, F., Fry, R. (2005). [Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity](#). Chagrin Falls, OH: Taos Institute Publications.

³⁰ Zimmerman et al, 1998

³¹ Liisa Horelli. *Network Evaluation from the Everyday Life Perspective – A Tool for Capacity Building and Voice*. Paper Presented at the Fifth Conference of the European Evaluation Society, Seville Spain, Oct. 10-12 2002. For more information email: liisa.horelli@hut.fi

Making choices about investing in a network vs. an organization

- *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 organizations 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 organizations 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 the network hopes to contribute to. 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 vs. taking over.
- Share knowledge vs. relying on an expert-counterpart model or knowledge transfer approach
- Invest for the long-term
- Rely on participatory approaches to M&E

⇒ ***Avoid 'model network' or 'blueprint strategies'.***

In *Networks in International Capacity Building: Cases from Sub-Saharan Africa* (1998), Prewitt and Mkandawire (1998) caution 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.³²

⇒ **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 chances of ownership and sustainability and hence undermine the essence of networking. Given that, it has been suggested that donors should act as sponsors, ensuring ownership remains with the network.

Some participants of 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 recognizing 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 facilitative 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 organizations (e.g. PAHO in the case of the Brazilian Observatorio)
- *Contributing human & financial resources* to facilitate communication, support joint initiatives, seed funding for projects or developing capacity, some operating costs for a secretariat (e.g. IDRC policy research networks).
- *Sharing of knowledge and expertise* which would not otherwise be accessible (e.g. donors shared documents on the PRSP³³ 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.”³⁴

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

³² Prewitt (1998) p. 25

³³ Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper

³⁴ See Fukuda-Parr and Hill, ‘The Network Age: Creating New Models of Technical Cooperation’, p. 185 & 194 in Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko, Carlos Lopes and Khalid Malik. *Capacity Development – New Solutions for our Problems*. Earthscan/ UNDP, 2002.

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 experience.

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.*”³⁵

At the same time, it’s 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 institutionalization 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 developmental objective (e.g. improving sector performance). Achieving the latter may or may not depend on the former, and seeking to institutionalize or ‘sustain’ a network carries certain risks, including potentially de-capacitating member organizations.

⇒ ***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 for contributing 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.

³⁵ Prewitt (1998), p. 44

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 e.g. by providing data for increasing 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 organizations 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 organizations.

M&E of 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. Networks are fluid and their trajectories are not easily predictable.
- Networks are characterized by diffused, emerging locus 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 indicators³⁶ 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 organizations 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 organizational 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

³⁶ In a research network, intermediate indicators could include e.g. 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, 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.

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 Sanghamitra Mahanty (2002),³⁷ 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 interaction among actors before projects – especially at 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 intervention (World Bank 1996), 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 organizations, 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 organizational 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 vs. as a secondary annoyance in the achievement of goals.

³⁷ Sanghamitra Mahanty (2002), *Conservation and Development Interventions in Networks: the Case of the India Eco-development Project, Karnaraka*

Annex A: Diversity of Network Forms

	'Networking'	INFORMAL NETWORKS	NETWORKS WITH SOME 'FORMAL' ELEMENTS (wide range of forms)	INSTITUTIONALIZED NETWORKS	INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
Form of organizing	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 & norms for decision making and emerging, or even relatively well established governance structures Small secretariat facilitates functioning of the network and is primarily accountable to network members	Legally recognized 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 & delivering on results are the main drivers.
Capacity / added value	Connections/ Relationships Access to information & experience	Space to exchange information, develop knowledge and practices and/or mobilize as an alliance/coalition to advocate for change	Collective identity and external legitimacy Capability to synthesize learning, to do research, to move things forward between meetings, to mobilize 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 organizations
Potential challenges and limitations	Benefits accrue mostly to individuals, with limited impact on organizations or institutionalization	Limited external legitimacy Risk of dissention around purpose	Due to limitations of resources and challenges of complexity, risks that the secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is viewed by others as capable of taking on more than it can. • can begin to substitute for the network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The secretariat can become driven by contracts and funding imperatives • Competition for access to resources can arise within the network. This may lead to loss of trust & less willingness to share information freely. • Routinization can reduce the free flow of information and limit dynamism and innovation 	Fostering and maintaining trust, joint ownership and collaboration Possible competition & 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, Madeleine 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

As the paper by Church et al notes: “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 (described 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” emphasizing positive features rather than looking for deficits.

Check-list for Networks

The Check List 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.

Other tools for measuring dynamism, presented by Church et al include the following: 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, Marilee, Anita Anand, Floris Blankenberg, Allert van den Ham and Adrian Saldanha (Eds), [‘Measuring the Unmeasurable: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Networks’](#), Published in 1999 by Women's Feature Service. New Delhi, India.

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.” Quoted 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, Michael Quinn, ‘Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century’ (1997).

The emphasis in Patton’s *utilization–focus* is, not surprisingly, on use, and underlying theories of change. Patton refers to a ‘chain of objectives’. (Patton 1997:218)

Fetterman, David, ‘Collaboration, Action Research and a Case Example’ (see web link below)

According to Church et al, David Fetterman’s *empowerment evaluation approach* “matches, or ‘fits’ the network project at the level of values, and its emphasis on democratizing 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)” p. 7-8

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

IDRC has developed a booklet on *Outcome Mapping*. It grew out of IDRC’s experience which, like other agencies, found it difficult to assess and evaluate the impact of its programs. *Outcome Mapping*, as a methodology, assesses the contributions a program makes to the achievement of ‘outcomes’ (as opposed to ‘impacts’). The focus is on people and organizations, in particular changes in behaviours, relationships, actions, and/or activities of the people, organizations or networks, as well as the influence of programs 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:

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 - http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26858-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html
- Church, Madeleine and Mark Bitel, 'The Power of Participation, - Capturing the Impact of International Networks', <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/madpdf/app2.pdf>
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