

PACT

***NGO Training
Materials***

Networks

Networks

Three Definitions

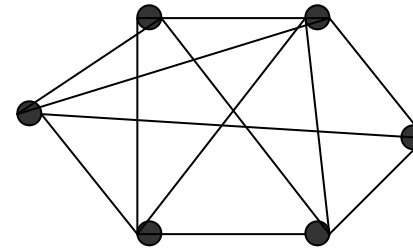
1. A network is a group of individuals and/or organisations who, on a voluntary basis, exchange information or goods, or implement joint activities, and who organise themselves for that purpose in such a way as their autonomy remains intact (ILEIA)
2. Formal or informal cooperation of 3 or more organisations with a common interest to reach together a certain, implicitly or explicitly formulated common goal (MDF)
3. A strategic network is a temporary alliance of individuals and organisations through which their resources are combined in pursuit of shared, defined, and consequential goals that strengthen the movement's position in relation to major opposing forces (Korten – Strategic Network)

Key Aspects of Networking

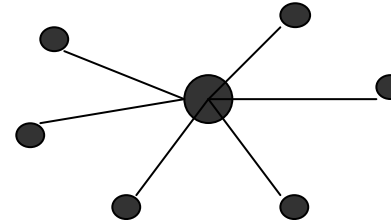
1. Members take part voluntarily
2. Members do things together they cannot do easily, or as well, alone
3. Members autonomy is intact
4. There is a great diversity of forms – both formal and informal

Forms of Networking

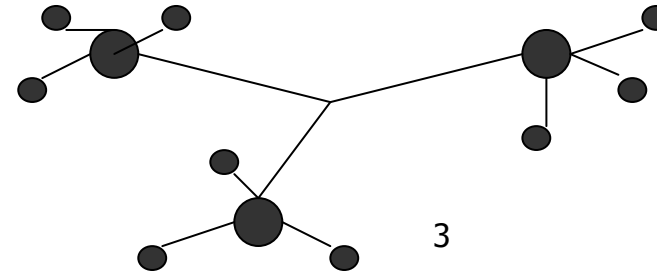
Loose – anyone can contact anyone



Centralized – contact is through a central secretariat



Decentralized – different functions are centralized, or geographical nodes



Possible Activities of Networks

Loose

- Exchange of information between members (newsletter)
- Cross fertilization of ideas
- Access to new information
- Peer support for each other

More Formal

- Research
- Training and technical assistance
- Common purchasing and marketing
- Common practices/methodologies
- Linked activities and joint activities
- Higher profile for members of the network
- Influencing public policy/policy dialogue

Stages of a Network

1. **Preparation:**
Initiators identify a topic of common interest, suggest a network, arouse interest, mobilise energy and resources
2. **Establishment**
Members form mechanisms and structures – formal to informal – promote coordination and linkage building
3. **Operational**
The Network sets up activities, manages resources, organises internal cooperation
4. **Network Development**
Network re-thinks its organisational design and management in the light of experience of network activities
5. **Sustainability**
Network considers life of network and what needs to be done to sustain it.

Possible Problems with Networking

1. **Involvement v. Responsibility**
are you giving or taking?
2. **Coordination or Control**
coordinating activities of members without attempting to control them
3. **Person v. Institution**
contributions of individuals need to be backed up by institutional commitment
4. **Information v. Action**
what are you hoping for from sharing information?
5. **Converted v. unconverted**
who are you trying to include?
6. **Process v. Structures**
Pressure towards institutionalisation and possible stagnation
7. **Autocracy or democracy**
Who is allowed to suggest / select new members?

Preconditions for Networking

1. **Common vision and common goals?**
2. **Common problems and constraints**
3. **Do potential members understand what a network is and what it might mean for them?**
4. **Are potential members prepared to spend the necessary time and energy in sharing (at possible expense of their own programs)?**
5. **Is someone prepared to coordinate things at the start**
6. **Will members put their money into it – do they value it that much?**

