

Working Paper 276

**Building Effective Research Policy Networks:
Linking Function and Form**

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ODI is Britain's leading independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues. Our mission is to inspire and inform policy and practice which lead to the reduction of poverty, the alleviation of suffering and the achievement of sustainable livelihoods in developing countries. We do this by locking together high-quality applied research, practical policy advice, and policy-focused dissemination and debate. We work with partners in the public and private sectors, in both developing and developed countries.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|---|
| (Anti) – MAI | (Anti) – Multilateral Agreement on Investment |
| ACBF | African Capacity Building Foundation |
| AERC | African Economic Research Consortium |
| ALNAP | Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action |
| BRP | Bridging Research and Policy |
| CIES | Consortio de Investigación Económica y Social |
| Conveagro | Convención Nacional del Agro Peruano |
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| CSPP | Civil Society Partnerships Programme |
| DEC | Disasters Emergency Committee |
| DevelopmentEx | Development Executive Group |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DSA | Development Studies Association |
| FANCA | Freshwater Action Network Central America |
| GDN | Global Development Network |
| ICT | Information and communications technology |
| IDRC | International Development Research Center |
| IFPRI | International Food Policy Research Institute |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| ODI | Overseas Development Institute |
| PPA | Partnerships Programme Agreement |
| PRA | Participatory rapid appraisal |
| RAPID | Research and Policy in Development (ODI Programme) |
| SARN | South Asia Research Network |
| SISERA | Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa |
| SNA | Social Network Analysis |
| SURFS | Sub-Regional Resource Facilities |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |

Executive Summary

We know that networks matter for international development. ODI is interested in learning more about how networks can help CSOs use evidence to influence policy processes. Evidence shows that networks are growing in number in developing countries, and between developing and developed countries. Increasingly, donors fund networked projects in different countries to draw on different skills and views. However, it seems that we know little about what makes networks work.

The functions of networks

Ongoing work on networks has so far focused on the functions that networks carry out:

- Filter
- Amplify
- Convene
- Invest/provide
- Build communities
- Facilitate

Based on a series of cases from around the world, but mostly from Peru and Cambodia, it seems that networks can carry out these functions within two broader roles of agency and/or support.

Having defined the functions that networks can play, the next step is to determine the structural characteristics (organisation, skills, resources, etc.) that networks need to have to be able perform them more effectively. For instance, what type of membership does a network need to be a successful amplifier? Is it the same as the membership needed for community building? Most likely the answer is not. Amplifiers will benefit from outward-looking members, whereas community builders will benefit from inward-looking ones.

This short paper addresses some of the main characteristics of networks to identify a set of criteria worth looking into to explain how networks can better carry out their given functions. This paper is based on the same premise as previous work: that, ideally, networks need to begin by defining the functions they want to play and then choosing their structure accordingly.

The form of networks

The literature and cases studied suggest that a series of factors affect a network's capacity to fulfil its roles and functions. These help us describe the network and what it is capable of doing.

Functions: What roles and functions does the network carry out? (Filter, amplify, invest/provide, convene, build communities and/or facilitate.)

Localisation and scope: Where are the network and its members located both physically and thematically?

Membership: Who are the network's members and how are they related to each other?

Governance: What are the behaviours and processes in place within the network that govern its short and long-term functioning?

Resources: Does the network have access to all the inputs necessary for its functioning?

Capacity and skill: Do the network and the network members have the capacity and skills necessary to carry out their functions and tasks?

Communications: Does the network have appropriate communication strategies to carry out its functions, thus amplifying messages outwardly or sharing messages and information within the institution?

External environment: What are the external influences affecting the network?

Strategic and adaptive capacity: Is the network capable of managing changes and shocks in both its internal and external environment? Can it manage those changes on its own or does it depend on others (partners, networks, donors)?

These criteria cover both the internal and external environment of the network and consider the structures and process that allow it to function and develop. Some of them are stressed by more than one. In essence, they provide a guide drawn from the literature and the understanding that the external environment, the internal organisation and the network's content matter equally when addressing success. Together, they affect the way a network works, providing them with opportunities in and challenges to achieving their objectives. Three key conclusions worth highlighting are as follows:

- Many networks carry out many functions: identifying a direct link between form and functions is difficult.
- There are, however, a series of organisational and functional characteristics that are specific to some roles.
- Membership seems to be a critical aspect of the organisational characteristic of the networks.

1 Introduction

We know that networks matter for international development. ODI is interested in learning more about how networks can help CSOs use evidence to influence policy processes. A literature review of networks by Perkin and Court (2005) drew lessons on how networks could influence policies: findings suggest that networks are growing in number in developing countries, and between developing and developed countries. Increasingly, donors fund networked projects in different countries to draw on different skills and views. However, it seems that we know little about what makes networks work.

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This short paper addresses some of the main characteristics of networks to identify a set of criteria worth looking into to explain how networks can better carry out their given functions. This paper is based on the same premise as previous work: that, ideally, the process of setting up networks needs to begin by defining the functions they want to play and then choosing their structure accordingly.

The paper is structured as follows: Sections 2 and 3 present a brief summary of the roles and functions of networks. Section 4 offers a literature review to highlight some of the main criteria identified on networks and institutions. Then Section 5 looks at some of the key structural issues affecting real networks, taking some examples from Peru and considers the effects of form over function. This leads to the presentation in Section 6 of an overall framework for studying networks' form and function. Section 7 concludes by addressing emerging issues in the relationship between function and form.

A brief note on the method

Arriving at the complete list of structural criteria involved an iterative process. After an initial literature review in which most of these factors were identified, a series of short interviews and a more in-depth study of Peruvian networks included in the report were carried out. In the process, it was possible to confirm which were relevant and which had to be added. Membership criteria, for example, required special attention as it became clear from the cases that these changed considerably between them. The paper is therefore an attempt to bring together these different sources and research processes and follow on the study of functions (Mendizabal, 2006a).

¹ This is based on work by Portes and Yeo (2001), Yeo (2004) and Yeo and Mendizabal (2004). It is further developed in Mendizabal (2006a) found at <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/projects/ppa0103>.

2 Functions: What Networks Do

Based on the work by Portes and Yeo in several studies and publications (Portes and Yeo, 2001; Yeo, 2004; Yeo and Mendizabal, 2004), we have decided that rather than providing a definition of what networks are or are not, a more useful way of addressing research policy networks is to look at the functions they fulfil.² These functions can help explain what they do. By describing what they do and how they do it we need to include all the different formal and informal teams, alliances, coalitions, communities and partnerships that make up the universe of networks. It is worth mentioning that among these networks our focus is on those that use research-based evidence to try to influence policy processes.

We first suggest that networks involved in bridging research and policy can be seen to be carrying out at least one of the following roles (or supra functions): **agency** or **support**. Agency networks are those in which members give the network entity (it could be the secretariat or a team of members' representatives, for example) the responsibility to pursue a particular change in policy or practice. In this case, the members provide resources and support to the network. A support network is one in which agency itself remains with the members: the network exists to support them. In reality, of course, most networks carry out both roles to at least some degree.

It is within these roles that networks carry out several functions that may allow them to use research-based evidence to influence pro-poor policy processes. These functions are (Court and Mendizabal, 2005):

- **Filter:** To 'decide' what information is worth paying attention to and organise unmanageable amounts of information. For example, the Development Executive Group is an international forum which provides and exchanges information on project and employment opportunities.
- **Amplify:** To help take little known or little understood ideas and make them more widely understood. Advocacy or campaigning NGOs such as the Jubilee Campaign are amplifying networks. The FairTrade Foundation, for instance, works through a network of those licensed to use the brand to amplify the fair trade message.
- **Convene:** To bring together people or groups of people. For example, Coalition 2000 in Bulgaria brings together CSOs, government institutions, the private sector and donors in various coordinated initiatives to fight corruption.
- **Invest/provide:** To offer a means to give members the resources they need to carry out their main activities. The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), for instance, provides technical assistance, skills and funding to its policy research partners.
- **Community building:** To promote and sustain the values and standards of the individuals or organisations within them. The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) promotes best practice and minimum standards of learning accountability and performance among humanitarian agencies.
- **Facilitate:** To help members carry out their activities more effectively. For example, the MEDiCAM network in Cambodia gives members access to services and facilities such as meeting rooms, a specialised library, communication means, training opportunities and access to policymakers and donors.

² This is further developed in Mendizabal (2006a) found at <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/projects/ppao103>.

3 Forms: How Networks Work

Understanding ‘what the network does’ does not necessarily shed light into how the network does it or why it does it. These questions have more to do with their structures.

‘Why’ a network carries out specific functions depends on two factors: an explicit motive and an implicit effect of its structure. The explicit motive can be observed in a network’s mission and is part of its organisational principles or governance agreement (see Creech and Willard, 2001). All members of the network are (or at least ought to be) aware that carrying out these particular roles and functions is the reason the network exists. For instance, the Development Studies Association (DSA) was created to connect and promote the development research community in the UK and Ireland: this is the explicit reason that it aims to build a development studies community.

The implicit effect of its structure, on the other hand, describes the functions that a network carries out as a consequence of its organisational strengths or weaknesses. For example, some members of a research network might have good links with media and policy networks. In this case, even if the research network does not have an explicit amplifying function, this could still arise as a result of these inter-network relations. Similarly, a network with an explicit convening function might lack the skills to attract members from audiences other than the research sector. Hence, owing to the implicit effect of an organisational weakness it would find itself carrying out community building or facilitating functions instead.

‘How’ the network carries out these roles and functions depends of a series of factors or characteristics that affect its structure and can explain how its processes work, who joins and how decision making happens, how conflicts are resolved, etc. The next section will review the literature and a few examples of networks to identify some of the key characteristics that could help us to understand how networks work and why they may carry out certain roles and functions better than others.

Unfortunately, there is no straightforward answer; based on the study of network functions, there is probably no optimal structure. Organisational structures will, however, determine whether the network’s functions are possible and might also be the cause of unforeseen ones. At the same time, there are several organisational structures that networks can adopt that will allow them to carry out the same function; these will depend on elements such as availability of resources and skills, and the external environment. The aim here is to arrive at a set of criteria to help us answer this issue and in the process learn from the systematic study of networks.

To determine the key characteristics of a network’s organisational characteristics we have looked for an approach that encompasses both the internal and external environment of organisations. Networks are often not closed, and several members are linked to other networks. Therefore, the criteria for analysis should allow us to understand how the network is organised internally as well as how it is related to external influences and factors. In the RAPID framework,³ the links that bridge research and policy are understood in relation to the policy context, the evidence and the external environment.

The starting point comes from the organisational appraisal methodology used by Yeo and Mendizabal in an evaluation of the Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA) (Yeo and Mendizabal, 2004). This organisational or institutional appraisal focuses on the institution’s capacity to carry out its main functions and considers four areas of study: the internal environment; the external environment; operational and organisational capacities; and adaptive capacities.⁴

This methodology, although very useful, was not developed for networks. As such, some of its parameters fall short of addressing the complexity of these organisations. Human resources, for instance, can be located in many different places; multiple organisational memberships mean multiple missions, goals and structures. Unfortunately, these are not issues easily resolved. Nonetheless, the

³ See: www.odi.org.uk/rapid.

⁴ This method was used by Yeo and Mendizabal in 2003 for the evaluation of the SISERA network (IDRC). For more information see Horton et al. (2003).

methodology does provide a useful guide for identifying the key criteria for a function-form analysis. In the following section we review some of the literature on the subject to define a broader set of relevant criteria to assess the structure of networks, leading towards a better understanding of how they work.

4 Appropriate Criteria: Issues across Literature and Case Studies

The literature on networks so far collected by ODI (Perkin and Court, 2005) suggests many different criteria to describe how networks are structured or organised. It seems, at this point, that most consider some key common issues such as capacity, resources, localisation, membership, governance and strategy.

4.1 General capacity and access to resources

We draw on the lessons from Paalberg (2005) and begin by considering one of the most common criteria to describe the structure of networks: capacity. Local capacity, according to Paalberg, refers to a series of local characteristics and skills. He loosely considers the following:

- Information and communications technology;
- Networking skills;
- Policy environment;
- Research capacity; and
- Organisational skills (to manage large and complex networks).

In a similar vein, Ashman (2001) provides a list of capacities desirable in a successful alliance with civil society. These include the capacity:

- To initiate joint action;
- For collective leadership;
- To organise a connected and flexible alliance;
- To mobilise external resources; and
- To sustain social change visions via cooperative relationships and building alliances.

Other studies, particularly IDRC's, focus on the sustainability capacity of networks – or the sustainability of the necessary resources. Are all networks sustainable and should they all strive to be so? (Wind, 2004; Söderbaum, 1999). The evaluation of IDRC networks suggests that some networks cannot be expected to be sustainable. In their view, networks can be a very useful means of distributing funding and other resources among their partners in developing countries and can provide excellent channels of research dissemination. Indefinite (or at least long-term) support from an external donor, even when unsustainable, would then be entirely valid as long as it fulfils its functions appropriately. Wind's report identifies four dimensions of sustainability: time, financial, relational, and process and structural. The argument is that networks do not need to be sustainable on all four.

ICT, on its own, has drawn the attention of various studies (see Paalberg above). The prevalent discourse on networks, some of it based on Castell's work, is one in which ICT plays a crucial role. In fact, O'Brien's (2002) examples of the networks in Mexico, the Anti-MAI and the International Treaty to Ban Land Mines (see also Rutherford, 2000) show the positive effects of ICT on networks' work. The same view is held by Narayan and Shah (2000) who, for example, consider that there are three conditions in closing the gap between global and local spaces: networks of people's organisations; vision and skills of social entrepreneurs; and availability of ICT. However, as Niombo (2003) puts it, arguing that ICT can play an important role is not good enough. We must consider how civil society and networks in developing countries can access and use it. Are there any preconditions that need to be addressed?

ICT in many developing countries is a luxury available for a limited minority of people or institutions. As cheap and easy as it now is to access an internet café or a mobile phone in some of the poorest towns of Peru, managing information, from whatever source, requires skills that are not imparted by the Peruvian education system and which are in limited supply, particularly in the poorest regions. In a project by Universidad del Pacífico and Save the Children Sweden in Peru to develop monitoring and

evaluation systems for local governments in the Peruvian countryside, institutions had limited access to technology and knowledge management capacities. The projects then had to resort to the development of a monitoring and evaluation system that considered simple indicators and that could be implemented with basic resources (namely, a pencil and a piece of paper).⁵

In Peru, the Mesa and Conveagro (two policy research networks), for instance, have very different ICT capabilities. Although they carry out similar functions, the latter's command of more resources has allowed it to use ICT to a greater extent. However, it is at far from optimal level; this is probably explained by its own members' limitations and preferences (most are based in rural areas and have limited access to technology but there is also a culture of face-to-face deliberation that is highly valued among the mobilised unions).⁶

Lin et al. (2004) found a similar situation in Brazil, where most CSOs do not have good ICT capacities and those with access to the internet use it more for research than for communications. So, having access to and command of ICT does not mean that it will be used to its full potential. The relative value of ICT can also be questioned. The Governance Network's (2003) evaluation of Bellanet argues that people and processes, not ICT, are the key to successful collaboration.

New advances in social technologies (that allow social linkages between people and institutions through the internet) such as dgroups, blogs and instant messaging have opened a new frontier of ICT for CSOs in developing countries, and networks in particular. Virtual communities of practice or networks can be created in a few minutes with user-friendly and free platforms (Mendizabal, 2006).

In any case, it is clear that the availability of ICT is an important factor, albeit maybe not a condition for success that can enhance the communication capacities of networks. The discussion of capacities (and all their characteristics), sustainability and ICT also brings to mind the importance of resources: physical, human and financial.

Limits on the resources (as well as on skills and capacities) that networks count on will clearly affect their ability to carry out all functions. However, some will suffer more than others depending on the type of resources that are missing. Certain functions are more 'cash-intensive' than others: convening, for instance. Others require expert human and ICT resources: filtering and amplifying. Investing/providing demands good logistical resources.

Resources: Does the network have access to all the inputs necessary for its functioning? These include:

- Staff: Do network members and the network as a whole have sufficient and adequate staff? Are staff well trained and experienced in their responsibilities?
- Infrastructure: Do network members and the network as a whole have access to appropriate infrastructure, including ICT and the physical environment?
- Financial resources: Do the network and its members have access to a secure flow of financial resources? Are they able to develop long-term business plans with financial certainty?
- Research and advocacy: Does the network have access to and command of the necessary resources for research and advocacy or communication – including databases, ICT, access to media, networks and partnerships?

Capacity and skill: Do the network and the network members have the capacity and skills necessary to carry out their functions and tasks? These include at least the following:

- Research capacity: Does the network produce sufficient and quality research? Does it have access to research from non-members? Do they have access to relevant and useful databases and sources of primary and secondary evidence including libraries, journals? Do research members or research staff have access to and use of necessary research methods and tools?
- Networking skills: Do key members in the network have the skills to network and link with other people, institutions and networks? Are there networking opportunities brought about by the actions of the network?
- Communications skills: Are the members or staff in charge of communications capable of developing and/or implementing a communications strategy?

⁵ For more on this refer to www.losninosprimero.org or contact the author (e.mendizabal@odi.org.uk) or Enrique Vasquez at the Universidad del Pacífico in Lima (vasquez_ee@up.edu.pe).

⁶ For more information on networks in Peru see www.odi.org.uk/rapid/projects/ppao103.

- Management/organisational capacities: Is there is a clear management structure? Do managers possess good and relevant management skills (not part-time researchers) with sufficient resources to carry out their functions? Can they handle complex logistical processes? Can they facilitate consensus-building processes?
- Fundraising capacities: Does the network have fundraisers with the necessary skills and access to the necessary information to tap into funds? As a consequence, have they secured enough resources?

4.2 Location and scope: network space and boundaries

When studying networks it is often difficult to determine where one ends and another begins. How clear are a network's physical and virtual boundaries? Social Network Analysis can show the connections between members and non-members of a network, expanding their boundaries almost indefinitely.⁷ When working on the evaluation of the SISERA network with Stephen Yeo, it was found that many of the network members were also members of other networks with similar functions; therefore, some of the benefits gained in one network were easily transferred to the others. Rai (2003) describes this boundary definition problem as a challenge faced when setting up the South Asia Research Network (SARN). Unclear boundaries might weaken or strengthen a network depending on its function or objectives. An inward-looking network (e.g. community building) or one with the need for a strong hub (e.g. capacity building) might be weakened if its members interact loosely with other networks and share some of the network's own resources. On the other hand, more outward-looking networks (e.g. facilitating or amplifying) could benefit from these unclear boundaries. The choice of members and membership rules is therefore extremely important.

Networks are, after all, social contracts (some legally binding) which, like all other contracts, can be broken. The success and sustainability of a network ultimately depends on its members' willingness to participate and respect the contract. Ostrom's (1990) work on governing the commons argues that members of an open resource management network will not break the contract as long as their short-term expected net gains from breaking the rules are lower than their expected long-term net gains from following them. In other words, they will cheat if it pays to do so. A system of incentives and penalties can be established to increase the gains from participation and the losses from non-participation. Hence, it is also important to choose the network's members wisely to guarantee similar interests and correlated sources of gain and loss. The Uganda Debt Relief Network (2003) offers an example of this, showing that if the institutional arrangement of the network is not strong enough, members might be encouraged to use the network as a platform to join others, thus weakening the network as they strengthen their own position.

The location and scope of the network affects the way it handles its communications (namely, amplifying functions). If the network is far from its members and clients it needs to develop its amplifying and filtering functions more so than if it is close to them. Similarly, the further apart the members are from the network's core, the stronger its community building or convening functions need to be to keep the membership together.

Scope can have similar effects on functions. Foro Salud is a network in Peru that addresses most health-related themes through a series of regional and thematic fora. The fragmentation into themes makes it difficult for the network to amplify clear messages or coordinate communications among all its members. It also makes it expensive to convene all participants since these can be highly heterogeneous in their structure and focused on entirely different regions.

- Localisation and scope:** Where are the network and its members located both physically and thematically? Some parameters include:
- Level of centralisation: Is the network centralised around one hub; are there multiple hubs or is it completely decentralised?
 - Global location: Is the network located in the developed world; in between; the developing world? Where are the hubs located within the network?

⁷ For more information on SNA visit: www.mande.co.uk.

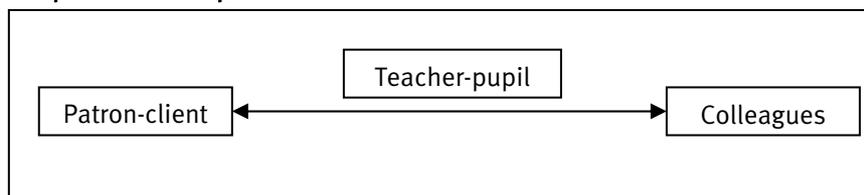
- Level of action: At what stage of the policy process does the network intervene? Agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- Scope: In what area of development does the network operate, by topic or sector of interest?
- Demand: Where are the networks clients or target audience located?

4.3 Membership: partnerships

Trust and legitimacy, crucial incentives to keep members from breaking away from the network, are often lacking in many network debates. These issues were identified as gaps in the literature by Perkin and Court (2005) and require additional attention (Ryan, 2004). Trust and legitimacy within a network context highlight the issue of the terms under which members come together. The establishment and absence of trust among the members can be a consequence of the presence or absence of legitimacy. In North-South networks or partnerships, these qualities are strengthened or debilitated by the type of relations that exist between members. Mancuso et al. (2004) study a series of North-South NGO partnerships, suggesting several possible relations between them as well as with other actors and members of their effective networks.

In Tanner's Cambodian case study in Mancuso et al., the relationship typology identified by Cambodian participants of the study is based around the funding source and mechanisms. It suggests that trust and legitimacy are affected by the financial relationship between partnership members. Thus, although the spectrum of relations ranges from a patron-client relationship through teacher-pupil to colleague, Cambodians only consider the 'colleagues' relation as the true partnership (one in which funding is not a factor of the partnership). Interestingly, this is not compatible with a more relaxed and flexible spectrum of partnership relationships considered by a more western perspective.⁸

Figure 1: Partnership relations spectrum



Source: Tanner (2004).

To guarantee a colleague relationship and a culture of trust and legitimacy within the network, an appropriate governance structure is needed. As the case of Cambodia shows, these need to be relevant to the local culture: consider the environment in which the network exists.

Membership criteria and relations can have significant effects on any network. The choice of members can determine many things: will the members contribute to its amplifying function? Will the network have to develop convening functions? Will members be willing to build a community?

The study in Peru found networks with different types of memberships: from purely institutional to purely individual. The former showed a tendency towards an agency supra-function and more outward-looking functions than the latter. Individual memberships award the networks more flexibility, but also require additional attention in building a sustainable community.

Within these broad structures, networks had open or closed membership systems. The closed systems were looking for members with credibility in the policy process or within their own contexts. Hence, they created strong and compact communities. The open membership systems looked for representation as a means of achieving legitimacy in the policy process. As a consequence, they had to develop more convening functions to cater for a more diverse membership.

⁸ For an alternative assessment of different forms of collaboration or partnership, see Creech and Willard (2001).

Membership: Who are the network's members and how are they related to each other? This includes the following (again, this depends on the specific context of the network):

- Criteria: Is membership voluntary; free; fee-based; means-tested; open; by invitation only?
- Diversity: How diverse are the members in relation to each other? What is its degree of heterogeneity? Do they all come from the same group or are there multiple groups? Which groups?
- Relations: What are the relations between the members? Are they patron-client, teacher-pupil, colleagues? Are there any relationships with non-members or other networks or institutions?
- Strategic members: Are there any non-participant members with power in the network, such as donors or members of the steering committee?

4.4 Governance

Unfortunately, governance is another modern day buzzword: it is difficult to find one universal definition. Hyden et al. (2004) define governance as 'the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions' (p16). They then add that governance 'refers to behavioural dispositions rather than technical capacities'. In the case of a network, governance can refer to the formal and informal rules that regulate the arena in which network members interact to make decisions.

The consideration of both formal and informal rules is important, and particularly relevant for networks which are often governed by both. In Struyk's (2000) study of think tank networks, members share similar values, have mostly informal interactions and are non-hierarchical. In a network made up of research institutions, this does not sound surprising (it would seem that a precondition for an institution considering itself a think tank is believing that it is worth being listened to). Even so, Struyk stresses that, to be successful, incentives for participation, an appropriate membership structure and network coherence are all necessary.

Creech and Willard (2001) dissect the issue of network governance and consider as its main role to resolve the tensions between members to improve the network's effectiveness. They examine four stages of a formal network including forming, organising, formalising and institutionalising relationships. They set out membership criteria checklists that, in the case of formal knowledge networks, include evidence of capacity, resources and relevance; suggest relationship models; provide best practices in the allocation and management of resources and expertise; describe the process needed to make the decision necessary to formalise informal relationships to arrive at a formal governance structure; and offer change management advice.

There is no ideal governance structure that will guarantee successful networks. In fact, as in political systems, it should be expected that governance agreements, the network's degree of formality and other governance characteristics ought to be closely linked to its building blocks (members, skills, resources), history and objectives. In any case, when developing a governance agreement (moving from the informal relationships to the formal) Creech and Willard consider 12 different issues that should be closely addressed (pp82-8):

1. Vision, mission and principles;
2. Roles of members and decision-making parameters;
3. Network structure;
4. Approval of network project proposals and results;
5. Roles for special interest committees, task forces and advisory groups;
6. Documenting the functions of the secretariat;
7. Procedures for withdrawing from the network;
8. Dispute resolution;
9. Clarity on intellectual property rights;
10. Clarity on assets and liabilities;

11. Limitations on advocacy positions and other public statements; and
12. Clarity on who has the authority in member organisations or the lead organisation to make decisions related to the network.

Governance: What are the behaviours and processes in place within the network that govern its short and long-term functioning? This category includes (context specific):

- Governance agreement characteristics: Is there a governance agreement in place? What does it include? (For a list of key characteristics see the 12 points above.)
- Organisational climate and culture including systems of incentives, leadership and management style, and organisational vision and mission.
- Network brand: Is there a network brand that is easily recognisable by users and members? What is the reputation of the brand?
- Degree of formality: Is the governance agreement a formal document or is it informal? How much of the network's intuitional arrangement is self-evolved?
- Governance hub: Is there a management/administrative/no hub? Who is charged with coordinating or running the network?
- Conflict resolution: How are disagreements within the network resolved?

4.5 Communications

Creech and Willard also consider communications to be a critical characteristic of networks. Hovland's (2003) work on communication of research for poverty reduction is illustrative of the importance of communications for networks, in particular those producing research and aiming to influence policy. In our function-form relation, the network's communication strategy, how it communicates, will define the message and who it communicates with. Good communication structures define the capacity of the network to provide any of the possible functions and supra functions. Good communications can have several objectives (not only amplifying a message towards an external audience). Communications can be used to achieve trust among members and build a community; they can help manage differentiated relations with distinctly different members (such as in a convening network); and they can help improve the provision of support services to the member. Among the networks studied in Peru, the strongest and most successful (CIES and Conveagro) had well developed communication strategies. In both, the network itself was an independent entity; almost separate from its members.

Communications: Does the network have appropriate communication strategies to carry out its functions, thus amplifying messages outwardly or sharing messages and information within the institution? How intense are communications between members?

- Communications strategy: Does the network have a clear communications strategy? Are there multiple strategies (coordinated or uncoordinated) between members?
- Means: Does the network have access to a variety of communication means such as internet, intranet, personal meetings, conferences or gatherings, phone, physically in the same space?
- Responsibility: Do network members have clear communication responsibilities both for outbound and inbound communications as well as for sharing of knowledge? Is this responsibility decentralised or centralised into specific hubs according to the network's context?
- Capacities and skills: Do the network members in charge of communication have the necessary skills and capacities to carry out their function?
- Network brand: Is the communications strategy compatible with the strengthening of the network brand?
- Intensity: How frequent are communications between members and with non-members?

4.6 External environment

The external environment of a network (or the policy context in which it exists) is an underlying factor that determines the structure. As described by the RAPID framework, the external environment is an important factor shaping the policy process and the way that civil society can engage with it. Underlying characteristics of the context (e.g. culture, religion, tradition, values) affect how people or groups organise as networks (and how the networks might transform themselves to engage with new contexts), and therefore networks reflect local structures; if society is fractured or unequal, then

networks will probably be so as well. The context defines its access to resources, skills and spaces. It can have an impact on the networks original definition of its functions and the choice of members and membership structure.

In Peru the different policy contexts of the education, health and agriculture sectors have produced very different networks (Foro Educativo, Foro Salud and Conveagro). Each one has chosen its functions and internal structure to respond to the opportunities and threats of their external environment.

It is clear, then, that the external environment affects the network's involvement in policy processes. How they are affected will depend on the aspects of the external environment that are more influential. The physical environment might affect the network's capacity to reach its members or audience, cultural factors might determine the way in which they act and economic ones will condition their sustainability.

External environment: What are the external influences affecting the network?

- Policy context: Who are the key policymakers and institutions? How does the policy process work, extent of civil and political freedoms, political contestation, attitudes and incentives, room for manoeuvre, local history of policies and power relations?
- Social and cultural milieu: What determines the attitudes of people inside and outside the network? Ideally, they would be compatible with the network's functions.
- Available technology, including ICT: What is available in the country or accessible to the network? Ideally, the network should have access to state-of-the-art technology to allow it to carry out its functions competitively.
- Demand: Is there demand for the network's products and services? Who demands it? Is it the government, civil society, donors? (Demand is crucial: without it the network loses legitimacy and relevance.)

4.7 Strategic and adaptive capacity

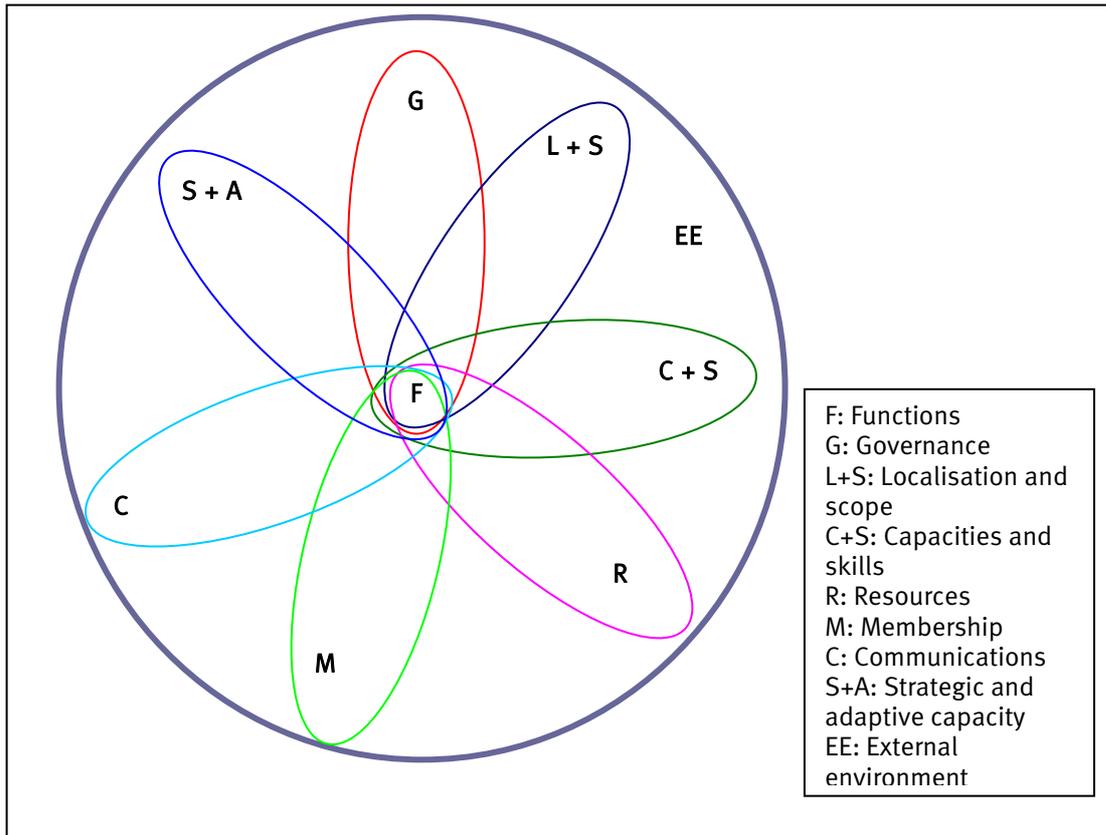
A final issue that is drawn from this approach to organisational assessment is the degree of strategic and adaptive capacity of a network. In general, this refers to the network's ability to cope with changes in its internal and external environments.

Strategic and adaptive capacity: Is the network capable of managing changes and shocks in both its internal and external environment? Can it manage those changes on its own or does it depend on others (partners, networks, donors)?

- Changes in members: Can the network address changes in the interests and values of its members?
- Changes in external environment: Can it respond to windows of opportunities in the policy context, catch up with technology and address changes in demand?
- Sustainability: Is the network sustainable? Has it been set up for a specific time-bound objective? Can it guarantee its sustainability in terms of time, funds, relations and processes and structure?
- Flexibility: Can the network carry out multiple functions to respond to internal and external forces? Does it have the capacity to adopt new skills and incorporate new resources?
- Strategic decision making and conflict resolution: How does the network make decisions and who makes them? This is not necessarily the same as what is stated in the governance agreement.

These criteria both cover the internal and external environment of the network and consider the structures and process that allow it to function and develop. Some of them are also stressed by more than one. In essence, they provide a guide drawn from the literature and the understanding that the external environment, the internal organisation and the network's content matter equally when addressing success.

Figure 2: How the form defines the functions of the network



For the purpose of testing some of these criteria as well as the functions considered in the paper, some examples of networks were briefly reviewed and their key functions identified. These, with a test-assessment of the criteria, can be seen in Annex 1.

5 Practical Examples of Important Structural Characteristics and their Effects on Functions

This section draws on some of the lessons learned from a recent study in Peru of seven networks, to highlight some of the ways in which characteristics can affect the network's functions.⁹ The study itself was based on the findings from the literature, which guided a process of informal interviews and data collection for each network. The following table shows the main roles, functions and key structural characteristics of the networks studied. Then, the next section discusses some of the conclusions drawn from these and other cases and suggests an expected relationship between function and form.

A similar analysis is presented in Annex 1, where some of the key structural characteristics are related to six different networks with clear tendencies towards a particular function.

Table 1: Summary of networks and their functions in Peru

| Network | Supra function | Functions (examples of activities) | Key structural characteristics (form) |
|--|--|---|--|
| CIES: Economic and Social research network made up of research centres and think tanks in Peru | Agency and support (both strong) | Provider/investor: resources (grants), research and communications capacity, advice and mentoring Amplifier: research findings of members, promote the brand, various media and products Convener: through specific projects reaches out to distinct users of the network's research Filter: research produced by networks, key research produced by others Community builder: promotes networked research projects and the development of thematic networks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat is strong and financially independent: this gives it the freedom to develop and implement communications strategies on behalf of its members without their participation at all steps of the process • Membership is institutional |
| Foro Salud Health network made up of individuals and institutions working in the health sector in Peru | More support than agency (both moderate) | Convener: brings together regional and thematic fora – each discussion on different issues, includes institutions and individuals from all sectors involved in health issues Community builder: created a national space for engagement and supports the development and running of regional and thematic fora The network has moved from filtering to amplifying to convening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open membership has given it a truly national reach: has become through its members a legitimate actor in the various policy processes |
| Foro Educativo Educational network made up of individuals | Support (with some agency) | Community builder: brings together all experts on the education sector, creates other networks, links people in different areas of the economic and political context Facilitator: provides its members with strong links to each other and facilitates the debate process Amplifier: individual or collective opinions of its members, through various media and at different levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and highly selective membership has given it a strong political position: legitimacy originates from the credibility of each one of its members; by selecting most possible candidates for key political positions hopes to counteract negative effects of high turnover in the public sector on long-term policies |

⁹ For a full description of the networks see http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Projects/PPA0103/docs/Networks_in_Peru_web.pdf.

| Network | Supra function | Functions (examples of activities) | Key structural characteristics (form) |
|--|---|--|--|
| The Mesa Network of CSOs addressing the problems of the elderly | Support (with some agency) | Community builder: promoting networked work among CSOs involved in the protection of the elderly, supporting the creation of new networks Amplifier: takes the messages of each member to policymaking fora, other networks (Foro Salud) and international institutions (HAI, UN) Provider/investor: empowers its members building their capacity to become agents of change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy influence through empowerment of its members; unlike other networks, the Mesa dedicates most of its resources to building the capacity of its members to become agents of their won change |
| Participa Peru: A networked project seeking to build the capacity of local governments to implement the decentralisation law | Agency | Amplifier: communications strategy at national and local level, through different media and with different products Filter: filters information towards its decentralised partners Convener: produces different communications products for each different type of audience (national/regional, public/civil society) Provider/investor: funds, resources, information, capacity building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-contracting relations between the secretariat and the network's members are considered more efficient than horizontal partnerships; this type of networked project is not designed to help its members carry out the own policy influence work but to allow the project to become the agents of change; members act as implementers at the local level |
| Conveagro: National agricultural network | Agency and support (both strong) | Filter: filters information from the policy context and research community to its members Amplifier: amplifies the demands of the members and the policy recommendations of the network (based on research) to different policy actors, engages in different media Community builder: unifies the agriculture and rural sector into one strong and representative body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The network has legitimacy based on its representativity of the sector: strength in numbers; it seeks strong unions and associations of producers and traders in the agriculture sector to award the network political leverage with which to introduce its evidence-based recommendations |
| Peru 2021: A foundation of corporations involved in corporate social responsibility | Support | Facilitate: guides corporations in the process of developing a corporate social responsibility strategy by directing them to experts and other corporations with positive experiences Amplifies: the successes of its members and the model of corporate social responsibility developed by the network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has developed a strong and easily recognisable brand; this makes it the first point of call for anyone interested in the subject of corporate social responsibility |

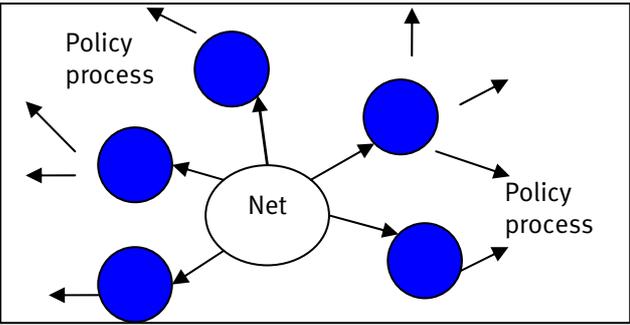
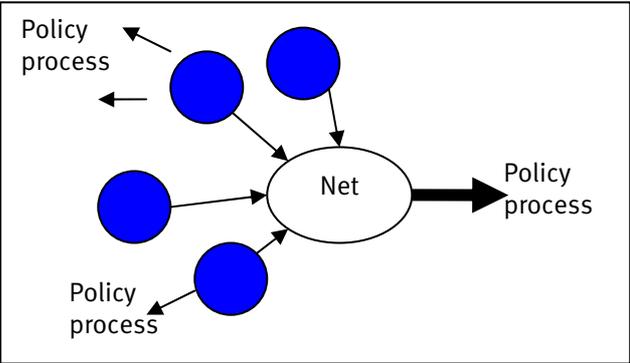
How do the structural characteristics of a network affect its ability to carry out its desired roles? These case studies have highlighted some ways in which some aspects of the form affect the functions (and vice versa). Some conclusions that could be drawn from this analysis are:

- Many networks carry out many functions: hence, identifying a direct link between forms and functions is difficult.
- There are, however, a series of organisational and functional characteristics that seem more closely related to some roles.
- Membership seems to be a critical aspect of the organisational characteristic of the networks.

6 Synthesis: Function and Form

In conclusion, it is possible to synthesise the literature and cases to consider the possible relations between form and function. In essence, we want to suggest ways in which the form might affect the networks' functions and roles. This section is based on the questions suggested by the literature and the various case studies explored over the research process. Annex 2 provides a synthesis of the examples of networks used in Mendizabal (2006a) to illustrate the various functions that networks can carry out and is the basis for the following information. These are expected relations that could be used to guide future empirical studies of networks.

Table 2: Functions and forms: possible relations

| Roles | Form |
|---------|---|
| Support | <p>Support roles suggest a structure that is designed for the flow of resources from the network's entity or secretariat towards its members. In the diagram below, the support network provides its members with the resources (which include funding, information, skills, contacts, ICT and other services) they need to influence policy processes on their own. The network is therefore more likely to develop inward-looking functions such as filtering, inward investing/providing, community building and facilitation, although amplifying and convening could certainly be important.</p>  |
| Agency | <p>Agency roles suggest a structure that is designed for the flow of resources from the members to the network's entity or secretariat, which will use them to influence policies on behalf of the members. In the shape shown in the diagram the network is more likely to develop outward-looking functions such as amplifying, outward investing/providing and convening.</p>  |

| Functions | Form |
|--------------------|---|
| Filter | <p>Filtering functions, unlike amplifying ones, are rather passive and require a system to find and collect relevant information. A filtering network will probably require a robust conflict resolution processes and skills to deal with contradicting information; it will therefore depend upon some type of centralised decision-making body. Filtering networks need good research (to find) and knowledge management (to store and make available) skills as well as networking capacities and ICT resources.</p> <p>Membership of filtering networks would be expected to respond to the network's objectives (if it deals with a few issues then members would be homogenous but if it is dealing with various issues then they might be rather heterogeneous).</p> <p>Filtering functions are a response to complex environments where information is not available in a user-friendly manner but similarly depends on freedom in access to information. Filtering functions need to respond to changes in the needs of the network members or users and with the rate of production of new information.</p> |
| Amplify | <p>Amplifying functions are more active and demand a structure that allows the network to read its users. A strong emphasis on the brand or name of the network is therefore expected. While amplifying requires a centralised editorial line (or message), amplifying activities can be carried out in a decentralised manner, even using members themselves. Amplifying networks requires strong communication skills and, increasingly, access to ICT resources. Membership, unlike filtering, can be open to demand since the messages can be useful for non-members. This would not be the case if the amplifying functions were directed internally towards the members themselves.</p> <p>Amplifiers need an environment with relative freedom of expression and appear as a response to problems with communications between members or with third parties. In competitive contexts, amplifying functions need to keep up with conflicting messages and changes in the demand for knowledge.</p> |
| Invest/ provide | <p>Investing/providing functions demand a system that is transparent and accountable to the network's members since it involves the distribution and allocation of funds and resources among the members and third parties. This requires clear financial systems and processes as well as skilled fund and project managers to plan, organise and implement the allocation of resources. In cases of capacity building, which would not necessarily involve the allocation of funding, staff need to be able to manage the logistics of the events – including the contracting of external services.</p> <p>Long-term investment/providing functions will require capacity to deal with changes in the demands from members and their external partners. Better skilled networks will be able to predict changes in the internal and external environment of the members and offer them funds, resources and skills to cater for changes in their circumstances (e.g. new staff or changes in policy focus).</p> <p>Investing functions are a response to an environment of low levels of capacity or centralisation in donor activities, making it more cost effective for a single actor to broker between members and funds/skills. However, in certain cases, heterarchical networks (where hierarchy is shared among some members depending on their skills and resources) can offer a more effective and decentralised investing/providing function.</p> |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <p>Convene</p> | <p>Convening requires a strong and active governance hub or secretariat that can undertake more complex filtering and amplifying roles but also manage various relations with differentiated memberships.</p> <p>A key aspect of a convening function is the need to work closely with different members and audiences. Heterogeneous (but focused on only a few issues) memberships are hence a characteristic of a convening network. To manage these relationships, the network requires excellent logistical, fundraising, communications and consensus-building skills. The skills required for investing/providing functions are also important for convening functions, as much of the relationship management, in practice, involves the allocation of funds, other resources and skills to the network members – through conferences, workshops, networked research, etc. Their capacity to communicate with different audiences may be assisted by the development of a strong brand around which these different groups can align their multiple positions and pressures.</p> <p>The external environment can be critical for convening functions. Networks need to be able to adapt to changes in it to keep these different audiences interested and demanding its services. Competition with other networks (with community building functions or more attractive convening ones) can be a challenge. This puts a significant strain on the network’s networking capacities and resources (both financial and non-financial) as long-term commitments and continuity in convening activities are necessary.</p> |
| <p>Build communities</p> | <p>In a way, community building functions require very similar capacities as convening but are focused more on a homogenous membership. Hence, there is less need for complex communication strategies. They do require, however, a clear governance agreement that promotes integration and overseas conflict resolution – as the avoidance of conflict is crucial for community-building functions.</p> <p>Membership is likely to be closed and more stable than with other more outward-looking functions; change might also be slower and less attractive. Community-building functions help create constant demand for the network and need, as with convening, to master logistics and networking capacities that will provide members with several opportunities to strengthen their intra-network relations.</p> <p>The external environment is, again, a source of competition, as members might also belong to other competing networks. Community-building functions are often a response to adverse external environments – groups that come together to gain power in numbers. Community-building networks need to be prepared to move towards other functions without damaging their capacity to protect their members.</p> |
| <p>Facilitate</p> | <p>Facilitation functions refer to services that networks offer their members to carry out their own work. Hence, highly specialised capacities and skills are necessary. Furthermore, and depending on the network and service, they will need to be located close to the members. Membership can therefore be homogeneous or heterogeneous but needs to be matched by the skills available. Key capacities and services could include all functions but also facilitation, mentoring or coaching.</p> <p>Excellent communication skills are necessary to reach out to different audiences; general networking skills can help develop close relations with their ‘clients’. Trust in the quality of their help is important as facilitating networks need to have trust in the capacity of the members they help to do their job.</p> <p>The services, however, are not free and networks need either to secure funding or to have a paying membership.</p> |

7 Final Comments

This paper builds on research on the functions of networks and on the ongoing study of real research policy networks undertaken by RAPID and its collaborators. It offers an insight into the reasons why certain structural characteristics were chosen in an attempt to provide a more complete and practical way of understanding networks.

It is by no means a rigid framework; in current research, some of the structural characteristics have proven to be more relevant than others for a range of networks. In the process, we have been able to identify issues that are of particular importance for describing and understanding the networks we study: membership structure, socio-cultural norms (e.g. in Cambodia an important aspect of the external environment is the lack of trust among people as a consequence of decades of political violence), the degree of centralisation, etc. These issues may then merit further research to determine the effect they have on the network and its functions.

The expected relations between function and form are intended to suggest the types of skills, resources, governance changes, etc. that networks and their supporters might have to consider if they hope to add to or change the mix of functions undertaken by the network.

These relations and the function-form framework can be used in self-assessments, internal planning processes and workshops. ODI has used the approach to think about how to develop a global network of CSOs interested in learning more and promoting evidence-based policy influence. We have collected a set of four case studies on Cambodian research policy networks. The approach has been used in workshops for the development and strengthening of knowledge networks and is also being considered by the coordinators and administrators of other networks as a way of taking their networks forward and addressing certain internal and external challenges that they face.

Finally, this research builds on the vast and more theoretical research on networks and hopes to contribute to it. However, the emphasis has been placed on finding a way of thinking about networks that may be useful for the people working within or with them.

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Annex 1: Examples of Networks with Different Functions

| Key function Form | Filter (support) | Amplifier (agency) | Investor/provider (agency/support) | Convenor (agency) | Community builder (support/agency) | Facilitator (support/agency) |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| | Development Executive Group | Fairtrade Foundation | CIES | Coalition 2000 | CIVICUS | MEDiCAM |
| Governance | | | | | | |
| GA | GA establishes independence of hub | GA emphasises brand | GA emphasises nature of investment of service/goods provision and degree of independence of hub | GA considers heterogeneity in membership and brand | GA considers term of inclusion of all members and brand | GA considers facilitation services provided by hub |
| Climate/culture | Passive | Active | Active | Active | Active/passive | Active |
| Brand | Important | Important | Not considered | Important | Important | Not considered |
| Formal/informal | Either | Either | Formal | Formal | Either | Either |
| Governance hub | Yes | Maybe | Yes | Yes | Maybe | Maybe |
| Location and scope | | | | | | |
| Centralisation | Centralised | Decentralised | Heterarchical | Centralised | Heterarchical | Heterarchical |
| Global location | Close to users | Close to communication resources | Close to funds and demand for goods and services | Relatively close to different groups | Relatively close to members | Relatively close to all members |
| Level of action | Does not necessarily aim to impact policy | Aims to impact policy indirectly | Aim to impact policy indirectly (through research) | Aim to impact policy directly | Does not necessarily aim to impact policy | Aims to help members impact policy |
| Scope | Broad and specific (sector) | More specific | Specific | Specific (also cross-sectoral) | Broad and specific (members) | Specific |
| Demand | Global | Global, local | Local | Local | Global | Local |
| Capacities and skills | | | | | | |
| Research capacity | No | Members have some | Yes | Yes | Yes | Members have some |
| Networking skills | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary |
| Communication skills | Not clear | Communication | Not clear | Communications, media | Communications | Not clear |
| Management/organisational skills | KM, managerial | KM, managerial, logistical | Logistical, managerial | KM, logistical, consensus building | Logistical, consensus building | KM, logistical, consensus building |
| Fundraising capacities | Good. Fee based | Good. Licence fee | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary |
| Resources | | | | | | |
| Staff (key skills) | KM | KM, networking | Networking, management | KM, networking, management | Networking | Networking |
| Infrastructure | Good ICT | Good logistics | Good logistics | Good ICT and logistics | Good ICT, logistics | Good ICT, logistics |
| Financial | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary | Necessary |
| Research and advocacy | Not clear | Communications | Needs assessments | Communications | Communications | Networking |
| Membership | | | | | | |
| Criteria | Open on supply; closed on demand Members can be filters | Closed on supply; open on demand Members can be active amplifiers | Open on supply; closed on demand Members might be investors/providers | Closed Members are active participants in substance of network but not necessarily on its running | Closed Members are active participants in running network | Open membership Members are not expected to be active participants in running network |
| Diversity | Not high, all within the development sector | Not clear | Not high, all research institutions | Diverse membership | More homogenous, all CSOs | Not diverse, all local health NGOs |
| Relations | Patron-client | Patron-client, teacher-pupil and colleague | Teacher-pupil and colleague | Teacher-pupil and colleague | Colleague | Patron-client, colleague |
| Strategic members | Key strategic members | Key strategic members | | Key strategic members | | Key strategic members |

| Key function Form | Filter (support) | Amplifier (agency) | Investor/provider (agency/support) | Convenor (agency) | Community builder (support/agency) | Facilitator (support/agency) |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| | Development Executive Group | Fairtrade Foundation | CIES | Coalition 2000 | CIVICUS | MEDICAM |
| Communications | | | | | | |
| Communications strategy | No clear CS | Clear CS | No clear CS | No clear CS | No clear CS | No clear CS |
| Means | Depends on weak links for outbound communication | Depends on members CS and use of brand | Communications accompanied by funds and services | Communications via networking activities | Depends on weak links for outbound communication | Publications, networking events. Depends on multiple memberships to other networks |
| Responsibility | Hub | Members | Hub | Experts | Hub | Hub |
| Capacities and skills | Good | Good | Not clear | Not clear | Good | Not clear |
| Brand | Important to attract new members | Central to CS | Internally | Central to CS | Not clear | Not clear |
| External environment | | | | | | |
| Policy context | Competitive policy context | Provides opportunities | Relative room for manoeuvre between policy and research | Highly dependent on the existence of cross-cutting issues; must choose its core objectives well | Policy context more interested in CSOs but CSOs still to disorganised | Exists as a reaction to a difficult external environment |
| Social cultural milieu | Information is important among users of network | Fair trade products are increasingly in demand. | Strong research community with good links to policy makers | Corruption is a sensitive issue making it difficult for network to work but guaranteeing its high profile | Information is valued among users and members of network | Research not highly valued by policy makers but support of donors is important |
| Availability of technology | Good | Good | Good | Good | Good | Still limited |
| Demand for final products | High demand for the products of the networks and the network's members | High demand for Fair trade products as well as fair trade issues | Demand of networks products is moderate, mostly from network's members and financers | Demand for network's products is high among non-users (e.g. general public and investors) | Demand is high among users | Demand for final products is moderate |
| Adaptive capacities | Must respond to client/pupil needs Deal with rate of production of information and new technology | Must respond to changes in interests and values Deal with competition from other messages | Must respond to changes in requirements from final clients of network members Must keep up with changes in knowledge and funding trends | Must respond to multiple interests Must be able to change or evolve core objective or issues to reflect external environment and member interests | Must respond to changing threats to the group Deal with competing memberships of network members Deal with changes in the situation of members, new members and changing interests | Must manage multiple memberships Must develop facilitation services and strategies to respond to changing environment Deal with new needs or interests of members Maintain value of network |

Annex 2: Summary of Relation between Function and Form

| Function | Filter | Amplifier | Investor/provider | Convenor | Community builder | Facilitator |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Governance | Passive; GA establishes independence of hub | Active; GA emphasises brand | Active; GA considers transparency | Active; GA considers heterogeneity of members | Active; GA considers inclusion of members | Active; GA considers the services provided |
| Location and Scope | Centralised, impact objective is not explicit | Decentralised; impact is explicit | Heterarchical; impact is indirect | Centralised; impact is explicit | Heterarchical; impact is not explicit | Heterarchical; impact is indirect |
| Capacities and Skills | Networking; knowledge management | Networking, Knowledge management, communications, logistics | Research, networking logistics, management, fundraising | Research, networking, communications, knowledge management, logistics, fundraising, consensus building | Networking, communications, logistics, fundraising, consensus building | Networking, Knowledge management, logistics, fundraising, consensus building |
| Resources | ICT, funds | Comms, funds | Logistics, funds | ICT, logistics, funds | Networking, ICT, logistics, funds | Networking, ICT, logistics, funds |
| Membership | Open in supply and closed in demand; members can be filters | Closed in supply and open in demand; members can be amplifiers | Open in supply and closed in demand; members can be investors/providers | Closed; members do not convene | Closed | Closed in supply and closed or open in demand |
| Communications | Brand for new members | Brand is central | Brand for donors/providers and members | Brand for members | Brand internally | Brand internally |
| External Environment | Complex | Relative freedom of expression | Engagement | Engagement | Unfriendly | Complex |
| Adaptive Capacities | Must respond to client/pupil needs Deal with rate of production of information and new technology | Must respond to changes in interests and values Deal with competition from other messages | Must respond to changes in requirements from final clients of network members Must keep up with changes in knowledge and funding trends | Must respond to multiple interests Must be able to change or evolve core objective or issues to reflect external environment and member interests | Must respond to changing threats to the group Deal with competing memberships of network members Deal with changes in the situation of members, new members and changing interests | Must manage multiple memberships Must develop facilitation services and strategies to respond to changing environment Deal with new needs or interests of members Maintain value of network |