

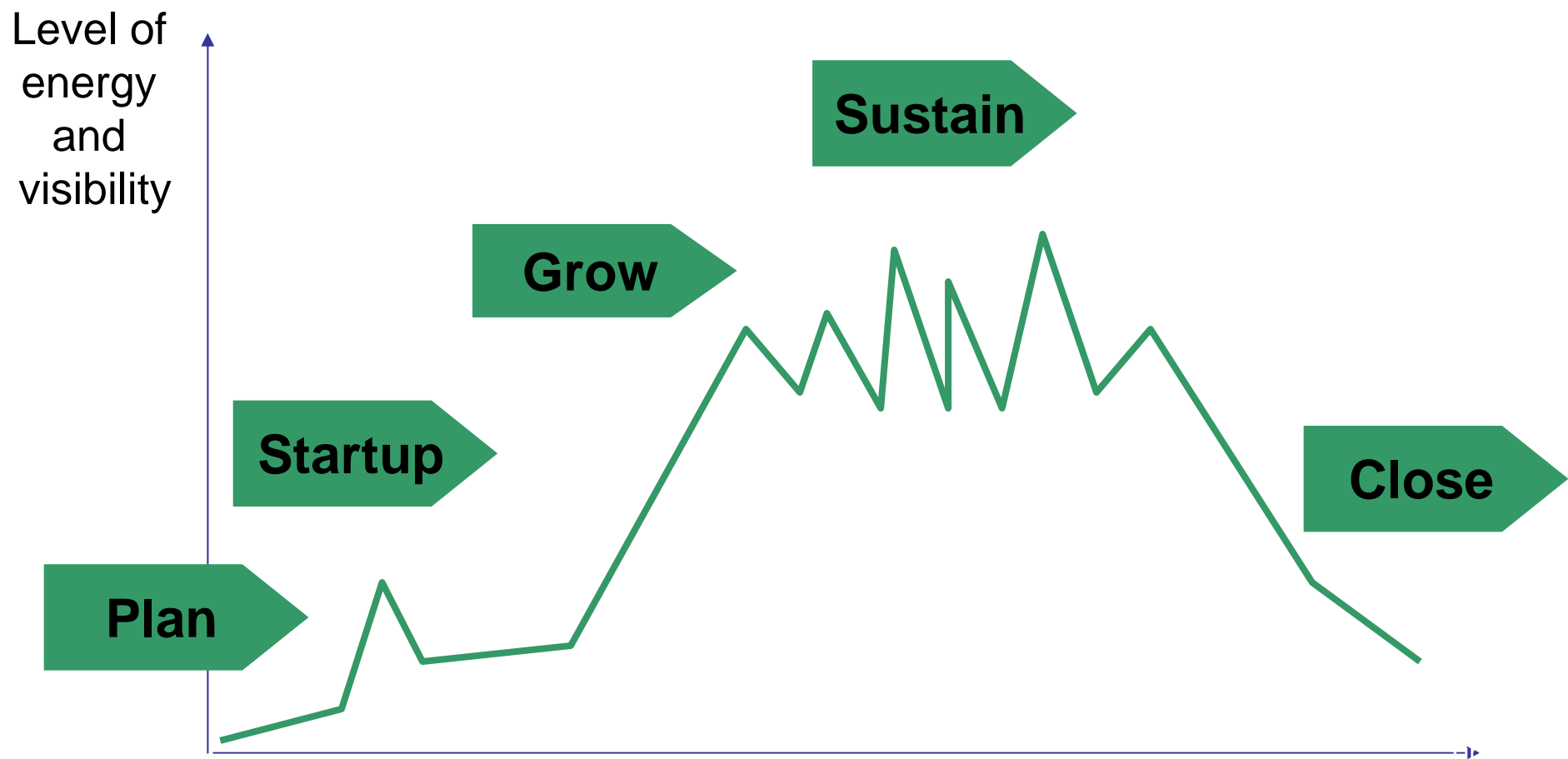
So, when are networks a good idea?

Enrique Mendizabal and Pam Muckosy,
ODI

Some questions

1. What do we mean by networks?
2. How do we consider their contribution to policy influence?
3. When are they more desirable than individual action?
4. What are some recommendations for maximising impact?
5. What is the relevance of this for ICT4D?

Life Cycle of a Typical Network



Networks Function Approach

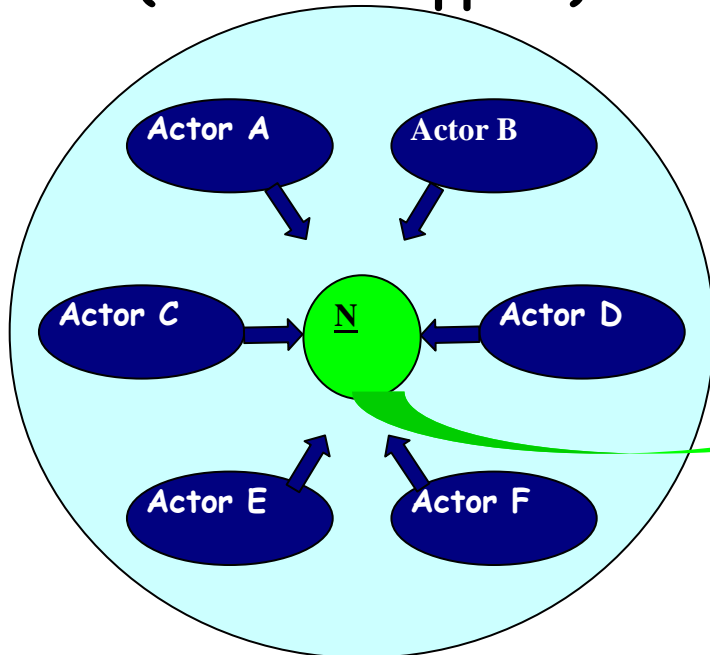
Roles:

- Agency:
 - Network (entity) changed by its members to become the main agent of the change they aim to achieve
- Support:
 - Network (entity) supplies the members with the necessary support they need to carry out their own work/agency

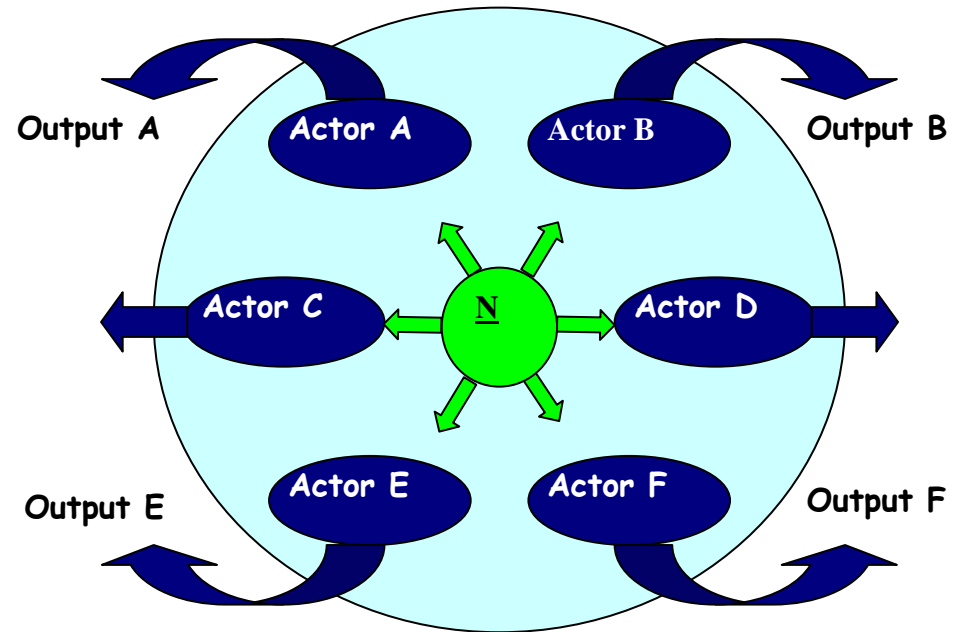
Form follows function

Networks Function Approach

Network Agency
(member support)



Network Support
(member agency)



Form follows function

Networks Function Approach

**Community
builders**



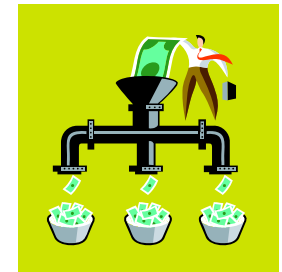
Facilitators



Filters



Investor/providers



Amplifiers



Convenors



Value Networks

1. Pattern
2. Structure
3. Process
4. Learning
5. Living

Networks, then, are “webs of relationships that generate tangible and intangible value through complex and dynamic exchanges between two or more individuals, groups or organisations”

Cases

Research policy networks

Communications/advocacy/campaigning
networks

Research/knowledge/practice networks

Global networks

National networks

Reasons for forming networks

- Fulfil **multiple roles** (support and agency);
- **Develop a community** is an end in itself;
- Facilitate the **pooling of resources** (financial, logistical, human and intellectual, for example) and **foster legitimacy**;
- Community building can contribute and **benefit from knowledge** production and exchange within a network, thus **creating value**; and
- Provide **access to knowledge and policy spaces**

Reasons for supporting networks

Donor perspective:

- Funding mechanisms
- Indirect support for policy influence

Member perspective:

- Strengthen voice
- Fine-tune, translate and communicate a message
- Benefit from additional contacts
- Etc.

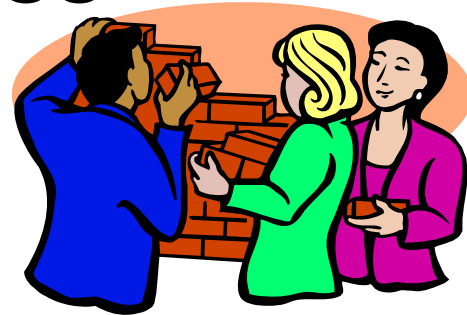
What do Networks Need to Do: Some Keys to Success

1. **Clear governance agreements** – to set objectives, identify functions, define membership structures, make decisions and resolve conflicts.
2. **Strength in numbers** – the larger the numbers involved the greater the political weight given to networks.
3. **Representativeness** – is one key source of legitimacy (and thereby influence).
4. **Quality of evidence** – affects both the credibility and legitimacy of arguments.
5. **Packaging of evidence** – is crucial to effective communication.



What do Networks Need to Do: some keys to success

6. **Persistence** – influence often requires sustained pressure over a long period of time.
7. **Membership of key individuals** – especially influential figures in the policy arena.
8. **Making use of informal links** – these can be critical to achieving many network objectives.
9. **Complementing official structures** – by their nature, networks add most value by complementing rather than duplicating official structures.
10. **Good use of ICTs and other networking opportunities** – ICTs are opening up great new potential for networking.



What is unique about ICT Networks?

*"In a knowledge-driven economy, talk is real work." Thomas Davenport
and Laurence Prusak*

Some opinions:

The **communication**-focused nature of ICT networks **suggests success
in advocacy**

Rose-coloured glasses?

Evolution of ICT networks towards development

ICT Networks advocate on **untread territory**

ICTs networks are **well equipped** for addressing unique challenges

Acceptance of **peripheral 'members'**

ICT policy implications

When might networks be less effective in influencing policy?

- ICT overload
- focus on ICT tools rather than application 4D

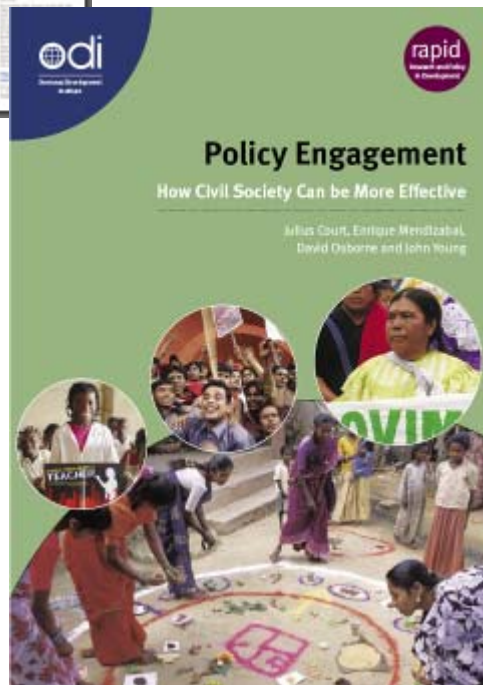
When might networks be more effective?

- Community building via ICT
- Balance between ICT and development focus
- Benefits of interdependency or specialisation of skills/knowledge
- Peer verification
- Hone debates
- ...

Key conclusions

- An appropriate membership composition and attention to facilitation of community building activities to promote a balance between collective and individual action that advances the network's goals;
- Clear governance structures, regardless of the degree of formality;
- A flexible structure capable of adopting new and managing multiple functions simultaneously; and
- An appropriate use of ICT tools to strengthen the key functions of the network

Further information



Join The RAPID Network

CSOs, Evidence and Policy Processes

- Generating greater awareness.
- 'How to' get informed policy influence.
- Building systematic capacity in this area.
- New research.
- 'Do and learn' policy engagement.

Email: rapid@odi.org.uk

Enrique Mendizabal: e.mendizabal@odi.org.uk

Pam Muckosy: p.muckosy@odi.org.uk

www.odi.org.uk/rapid