NETWORKING

CURRENT
MODALITIES
AND
FUTURE SCENARIOS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CB   : Capacity Building

Abbreviation	Definition
CB	: Capacity Building
CBS	: Copenhagen Business School
CD	: Capacity Development
BOND	: British Overseas NGOs for Development
DAC	: Development Assistance Committee
DFID	: Department for International Development
ECDPM	: European Centre for Development Policy Management
GEPPA:	: Research Network for Governance, Economic Policy and Public Adm.
ICCO	: Inter-church Organisation for Development Cooperation
J4P	: Justice for Poor
KAB	: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviour
KM	: Knowledge Management
Norad	: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
MDG	: Millennium Development Goals
M&E	: Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
OD	: Organisational Development
ODI	: Overseas Development Institute
OL	: Organisational Learning
PME	: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PRNGO	: The NGO Counselling Service
PRSP	: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RBA	: Rights-based Approach
SCSC	: Sida Civil Society Centre
Sida	: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TOR	: Terms of Reference
UNAIDS	: United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
VENRO	: Association of German Development NGOs

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I. BACKGROUND

A number of trends, simultaneous developments and realisations have prompted a joint initiative among five major Danish thematic networks within the international development community to explore future scenarios of networking and, as part of this, theories and lessons regarding networking.

This initiative is very pro-active and expresses commitment to a continued development and nourishment of networking forms among Danish development NGOs. At the same time this study engages with considerations that would have been relevant and natural to address at the time when the initiation and the funding of networks started. The five networks are:

The Danish Child and Youth NGO Network
The Danish Education NGO Network
Thematic Forum
Gendernet
Aidsnet

All five networks have - by and large - the same structure and source of funding, (Danida), and they all have capacity development (CD) and knowledge sharing as a primary objective.

The overall aim of this study is to:
- Provide a solid basis for discussion of the future perspectives for NGO Networks including a synthesis and analysis of experiences regarding NGO networks in Denmark and aboard
- Discuss the networking concept on the basis of the study and create a framework for common positioning and decision among Danish NGO Networks regarding possible scenario for future networking cooperation.

A Reference Group appointed by the Networks involved has been engaged in the study and has provided input and reflection during the process, including participation in a mini-scenario workshop. Some of the findings have also been shared within the larger NGO Community at a seminar on the revision of the Danida Civil Society Strategy and the observations taken into account. A debriefing has taken place with the Reference Group and the Final Report has been approved. In light of the opportunities presented in connection with the revision of the Danida Civil Society Strategy, the Reference Group is currently considering the most appropriate forum for discussion of the future architecture of the Danish Networks.

The Networks have asked the following questions that have guided the study:

Focus Question One: When and how have the networks contributed most to improving the quality of the Danish NGOs work and performance?

Focus Question Two: Which other aims and long-term visions could there be for the Danish Networks beyond that of knowledge sharing and capacity development?

Focus Question Three: Which structures and processes can be used in networks in particular structures other than the present dominant model?

Focus Question Four: How can the sustainability of the networks be ensured in the long run?

Finally, the TOR request that three different future scenarios for the Networks be identified, which can serve as a basis for reflection and clarification of positions.

The Coordinator Group and the Networks are found to have a very good picture of where the enabling dynamics may be found and where weariness and inertia are emerging. This understanding is established both through the daily work as coordinators or participants in networks and through a large number of reviews and evaluation of the networks carried out recently, which shall not be repeated here[1]. Furthermore, several of the Networks have launched debates about future activities and added value. The challenge of the current process is to take the thinking one step further both conceptually and strategically in a future-minded and visionary manner. This in turn means that Focus Question One will be given relatively less emphasis, and that the presentation intentionally presents matters to the point to help clarify positions for the future.

It is interesting to note that this study and process is initiated at a time when the Danish NGO Network Landscape has materialised, formalised and developed over a number of years. Many of the questions posed now would have been very relevant at the time when the structure and modalities of the networks were being designed. The same goes for the comparative international perspective, which was not included in the design phase nor in the individual network evaluations or the meta-review conducted by Danida. This will naturally frame the scenario development and the cooperation among networks will naturally be in focus. The current revision of the Danida Civil Society Strategy and the establishment of yet another network, NGO Forum, underscore the relevance and topicality of the current visioning exercise. These agenda setting initiatives have been launched during this study, which in turn have implications for the intended use of the study.

The assignment is initiated by a number of Networks, which share both commonalities and differences. Some have just started and others are soon reaching the limit for Danida support. The present study will not picture each and every Network and its particular perspective as this has been done in several evaluations. Rather the task is to move beyond the individual network perspective and capture the span, the different nexus in the network cooperation, possible dilemma and common drivers.

While the realm of interest of the Danish NGO Networks is both capacity development and network dynamics, the present study will focus on the network dimensions and less on the capacity development aspects. Reference is made to the capacity development study launched by the Danish Child and Youth NGO Network (Lund Madsen, 2005). A visioning exercise also ideally calls for an assessment of future trends and developments within the overall aid architecture and dynamics within the civil society sector globally. It goes without saying that networking should reflect and be attuned to the role of Danish NGOs in supporting Southern Partners, in promoting Global Goals and in enhancing participation and information in Denmark. However, the scope of this study does not include an assessment of the global civil society dynamics, the increased importance of global networks etc., and reference is made to the background studies made as part of the revision of the Danida Civil Society Strategy (www.um.dk). The duration of the study has been very short in turn setting a limit on the number of stakeholders consulted.

The report is structured in three main parts: Chapter II provides the meta-reflections around networking with observations pertaining to the Danish experiences, Chapter III gives examples of networking structures and purposes in neighbouring countries and Chapter IV presents four scenarios for NGO relationships within networking and beyond.

As the Consultant on this assignment I want to express appreciation for the excellent cooperation enjoyed with the Reference Group and for the forthcoming and engaged exchange with the people consulted. It is recommended that the outcome be shared in an appropriate form with those who devoted time and attention to making this a truly interesting process.

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[1] See list of literature

2. NETWORK CONCEPTS, DYNAMICS & LESSONS

The first network related paper initiated by two Danish NGO Networks in 2004 addressed both the definitions of networks and in particular the drivers or obstacles to participation in networks (Nielsen, 2004). It covered typologies of networks, the main services provided by networks; it had a theoretical scope and addressed the following dimensions: Performance, Objectives, Capacity, Architecture, Individuals.

This study and thus this knowledge have been available within the Danish NGO Thematic Network community for three years by now and we will seek to use it as a springboard to move beyond the established thinking.

The finding of this scenario study is that Social Network Analysis is a tremendously large field with dozens of schools of thought and theoretical disciplines. The other field of relevance to the Danish Thematic Networks, namely Knowledge Management, has also been expanding tremendously, making it impossible to do justice to it in this short paper. In earlier decades the term 'inter-organisational cooperation' was often termed 'coalition' or 'alliance' especially if the goal was to achieve change in society, and many manuals and evaluations have been made in this field. Today there is a lot of thinking, research and evaluation related to NGO advocacy/agency networks and probably more than in the field of NGO network collaboration for learning. One example is the large ODI study on network for policy influence and impact based on a review of over 100 texts and documents. (ODI, 2005) and the ODI network on research and policy, RAPID. Moreover, the recent study conducted by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) initiated by DAC's Governance Network offer a very detailed and comprehensive overview of the modalities of networking and of conceptual approaches to network capacity (www.ecdpm.org).

In order to navigate in this ocean of theoretical approaches, analytical concepts and research works the burning questions of the Danish NGO Networks have been used as 'search machines'. Moreover, some of the recurrent themes and issues surfacing in the evaluations and reviews of the Danish Networks have been used as 'path finders'. Thus the presentation below is very selective and seeks to provide concepts and understanding that will help identify and articulate future visions of the Danish Networks and address some of the current problems. The report is not an evaluation and the observations are at times deliberately put to the point in order to support future visioning.

2.1. Distinguishing features and qualities

"The network organization's hallmark is that it possesses self-managed information flows, uses IT extensively to engage in intensive knowledge exchange, communication across team and functional boundaries, a management that is focused on business process, high degree of decentralization, low formalization, low hierarchy, flexible roles, teams being the organization units, power defined as expertise, sharing being a salient cultural value, and innovation being the salient capability. (Travica, 1999, 20)

The principles for good networking that have materialised over the years match the theories about networking:
- The voluntary nature and non-binding nature
- Motivation as the driving force
- Rewards, Appreciation and Recognition as the main stimulants of networking participation
- Trust as a fundamental base
- Organism in terms of flexibility, openness, transparency and accessibility
- Process focus

- Personal representation (Tematisk Forum, 2007, 2; Nielsen, 2007, 26; Taschereau, 2007)

Having said that, networks unfold and position themselves differently on a number of key dimensions or continuums, as shown in the diagram below:
- Personally or organisationally hosted and driven
- Non-formal or formalised
- Decentralised or centralised
- Homogeneous or heterogeneous members/participants
- Support or Agency/Advocacy functions

Basically all networks can position themselves within this spider diagram along the various continuums.

Figure I. Dimensions and Continuums in Networking

Hanne Lund Madsen, 2007
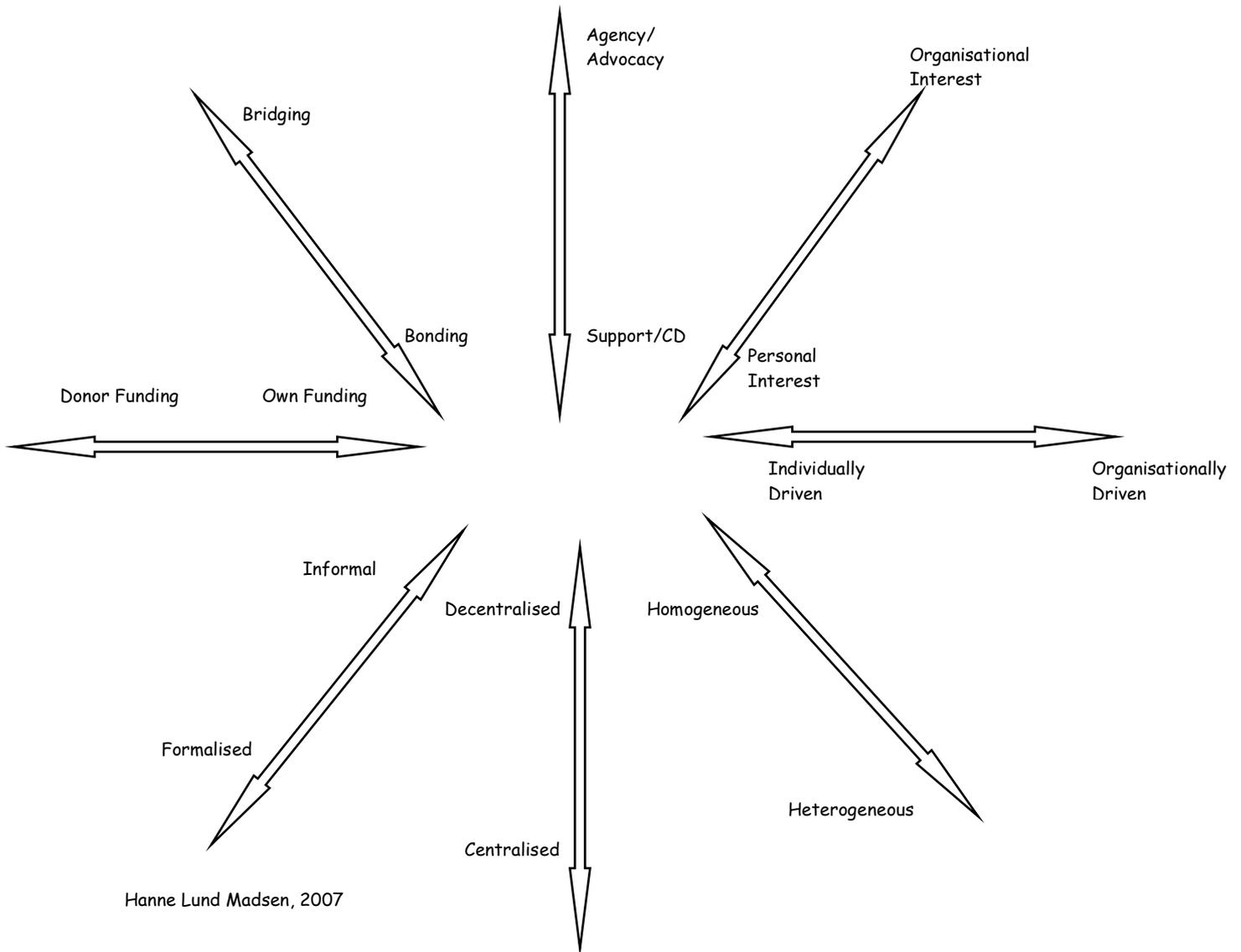
In an effort to encircle the distinctiveness of networks, a comparison with organisations or with projects and partnerships is often made (Annex IV).

It is clear that when looking at the Danish Networks they contain just as many features of a project organisation as of a network – indicating that the identity may be an issue creating some of the repeated discussions as to direction and outcome.

Networks are means to an end – unless the distinctiveness is really called for or seen as the solution then it need not be a networking model that is required. A very centralised network with particular functions should perhaps rather be considered an umbrella organisation.

Finally, networks are more than anything else about relationships and the fostering of conducive relationships for various purposes.

The network framework

ECPDM models the network's internal and external relationships in the following way while giving emphasis to the capabilities within the network:

Figure II. The Network Framework

Figure 1: Dynamic interplay between network capabilities, context and motivations/drivers in networks.
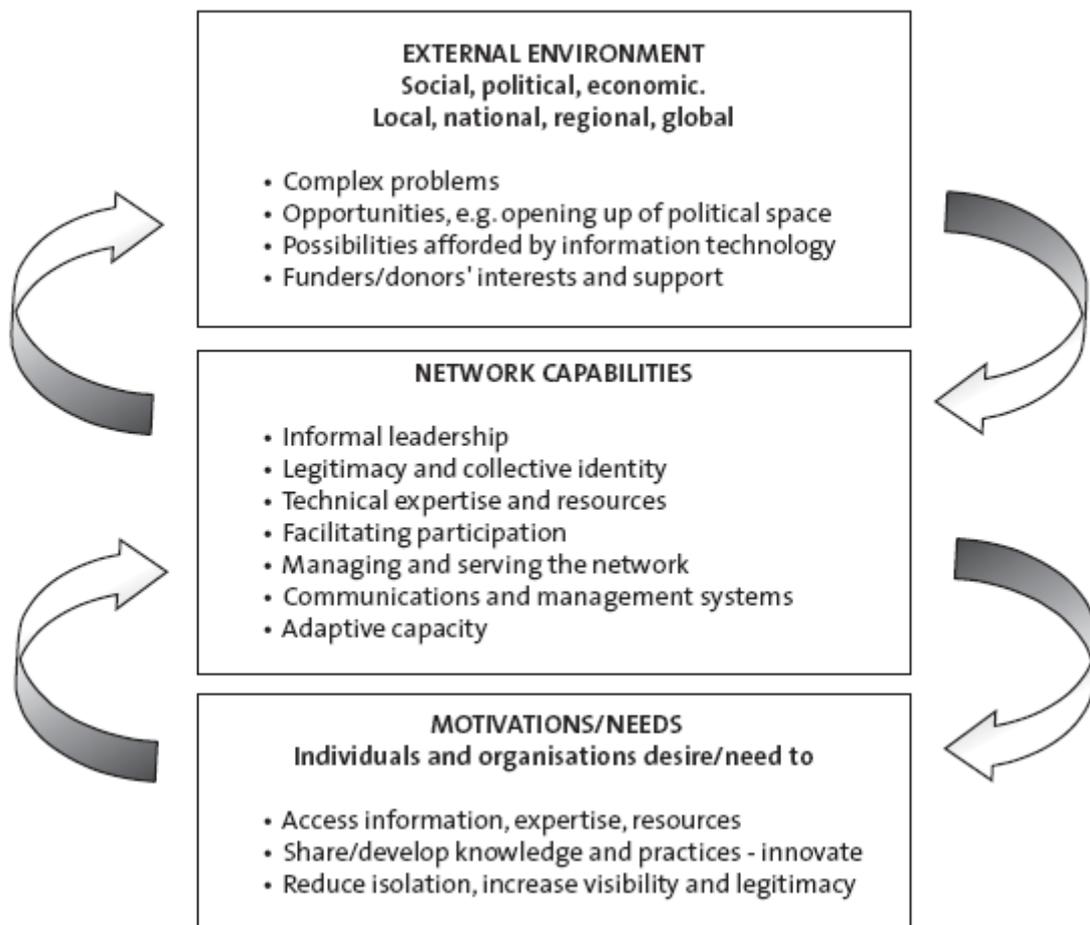
Source: Taschereau, 2007, 9

Context and motivations/needs

The figure highlights the contextual framework for the establishment and development of networks as well the motivation/needs among the members. As learning networks, the Danish NGO Networks have perhaps been less driven by particular changes or issues in the context as many advocacy networks are, but clearly the facility opened up by the Civil Society Strategy and matched by Danida funds have been a significant opening.

Nielsen, 2004, accounted for the literature, saying that organisations participate in networks with the aim of improving their performance. This applies both to advocacy and support networks. In the case of advocacy networks, the improved performance is related to greater shared constituency, better campaigns, better research, more channels of influence to use, etc. In the case of support and CD networks the improved performance is anticipated to be achieved in-directly through the improvement of methods and competencies within the organisation's own work. However, as mentioned frequently, the transmission mechanisms for this indirect performance support are poorly developed, and relatively few member organisations have decided on networking profile in a strategic perspective, or identified organisational praxis changes to be fuelled by networking participation. The predominant view has been that networking for learning and for professionalisation is a good thing, which will probably also bring back inspiration to the organisation.

It is important to understand the "space" in which the networks and the member organisations operate within today and at the time of establishment. The Danish NGO Networks started in a context characterised by
- Relatively few service providers and resource centres focussing on the non-profit sector
- No centre-placed institution (and network) like INTRAC in England monitoring and responding to the needs of NGOs and strategically looking ahead (CASA aspired to this role within the field of development cooperation also but did not survive)
- Relatively little mobility between the research and practice development community
- Little knowledge praxis developed by framework agreements like the ones pursued by DFID[2]
- No clearly identified competence hub for organisational development
- Danida push for sector specialisation, but the capacity assessments of the Danish NGOs have not had competence and professional requirements high on the agenda
- General pre-occupation and push for documenting results
- Networking receiving limited strategic and political attention
- Low investment in human resource development (staff and leadership) within organisations.

The Networks thus filled a vacuum in terms of Danish platforms for knowledge building, learning and competence development and have not been subject to much competition from actors or platforms offering courses, network facilitation etc. up till now.

However, since the Danida Civil Society Strategy, 2000, in a new way paved the way for thematic networks it took quite some time to get the present networks operating – for many reasons, including the formation time within the networks, approval processes within Danida and - as noted by many observers - little priority and no urgency of need in getting the networks going. The Danish Child and Youth NGO Network was established as the first in 2003, and the preparation phase of Thematic Forum took five years with many stalemates at various points in time. The informal former NGO Contact Committee has just recently been reborn and formalised as a political organ and voice of the NGO community.

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[2] DFID enters framework agreements with research centres, universities, etc. to provide expertise and new thinking in policy prioritised areas of development cooperation.

Other networks had been in existence for a number of years – for example *92 Gruppen*, which has a different format and set up with an umbrella-type organisation and strong emphasis on advocacy and lobby. Yet again others died a silent death such as *Fagligt Forum* focussing on education and information about global issues. Parallel to the efforts unfolding for Thematic Networks, Danida established their virtual Practice Networks with varying degrees of success and research networks like GEPPA was launched[3]. *Frivillig Klub* (Volunteer Club) at CBS started research in the dynamics of volunteerism and built networks around this initiative. The 2006 Network Review provides further overview of these developments (Danida 2006).

Broadening the picture, it is important to note that the Thematic Networks are just one among several knowledge streams and platforms, which the Danish NGOs are engaged with. Most of the Danish NGOs are members of, or affiliated to, international federations or organisations in which a lot of development and sharing takes place with regard to best practices, innovations, learning and sharing, etc. Moreover, many of the NGOs participate in international learning and knowledge networks within HIV/AIDS, Gender, Environment, Human Rights, Children, etc.

However, the context in which the Networks operate has changed over the years – not least due to the increase in the number of technical networks and the recent formalisation of a political advocacy network, NGO Forum. The PRNGO has developed and increased its services and scope and is now managing a small networks appropriation. Moreover, the developments that have spurred the revision of the Civil Society Strategy also influence the framework conditions of the networks and their challenges. Consideration of new scenarios for the Networks is thus warranted.

2.2. Purpose: Support or advocacy?

Before moving into further detail it is important to establish what types of networks we are talking about in order also to see where they could possible be moving or would want to remain.

Networks are a means to reaching a goal. The various typologies of networks thus commonly evolve around definitions relating to purpose and secondly to how the network is structured and operating to match this purpose. Keeping the purpose in mind will also remind us that networks may not be the only or even best means of achieving the purpose.

The most fundamental distinction or characteristic of a network is whether the network defines itself as a support and capacity developing network or as an agency and advocacy network. The first is primarily a facilitative function focussing inwards within the network and helping network members perform their own functions better. The latter is an outward directed network seeking to obtain changes through joint action in societies (RAPID, 2005a). The raison d'etré is fundamentally different from the support network.

It is clear that the Danish Networks are presently mainly support and learning networks and they are by design stripped of any direct advocacy or agency function. However, they do have information and dialogue functions, which are being explored more and more and they also sometimes act outwards. Many observers note that the NGO leadership is very cautions that the networks do enter into the field of advocacy, as the NGOs themselves, in their own capacity, do the advocacy. Danida, too, is cautiously watching that there are no 'political activities' involved and generally refer to the NGO Forum when decisions are to be taken. When NGO leaders call for more emphasis on advocacy within the work of Thematic Forum, it is purely confined to Thematic Forum building competence of the

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[3] GEPPA has now been merged with to other research networks into one called Danish Development Research Network

staff in promoting advocacy with partners in the South. (Thematic Forum, 2007). The recent establishment of NGO Forum as the political voice of the NGO Community underlines that advocacy and agency may be considered a "no-go area" for the support networks.

A lot of the literature and research focussing on the functions, challenges and issues surrounding advocacy networks does not apply to the Danish Support Networks. However, when looking into the future and considering anew the purposes and the matching means, the question of advocacy and agency gains new relevance.

The Needs Assessment Report commissioned by Thematic Forum indicated at the time a tentative agreement within the Danish NGO community, that the NGO Forum is the political organ and the Networks are devoted purely to technical competence development. The consultations in connection with this study showed both openness and necessity of reconsidering the prudence of this arrangement and especially to seriously considering a closer link between the thematic networks and NGO Forum.

One-way street?

Recent research suggests that many advocacy networks from the establishment host certain support functions or develops support functions over time. However, a support and CD network cannot turn into an advocacy network – that is, if it was to turn into an advocacy network it would imply a rebirth of the network, with new mandates and authority and possibly also new funding sources.

Experience also shows that advocacy networks, by their very nature, engage the leadership of the members in deciding on the position and claims to be advocated, and the participants in an advocacy network mobilises both the constituency and the leadership – both upwards and downwards. However, learning and CD networks mainly mobilise at the vertical dimensions – among the participants themselves and among potentially new members- and more seldom at the horizontal dimensions. Advocacy networks are really concerned about constituency and leadership, whereas learning networks are less focussed, if at all, on constituency and for many reasons have received little on-going attention at the leadership levels. Generally the trend has been that top-management or even Boards may endorse the establishment of knowledge networks as an important vehicle for the organisation (UNDP's knowledge networks) and the implementation and operationalisation is delegated to relevant units within the organisation – it is not a recurrent issue on the management agenda.

The Danish Network Coordinators and Steering Groups have often expressed frustration with the difficulties of attracting leadership attention to the networks. Both due to the realisation that the transmission mechanisms from network to organisational praxis requires leadership involvement and commitment to materialise, and because the themes of the network (HIV/AIDS or Gender) deserve more attention at the political and strategic levels of the member NGOs. Finally, more recognition and appreciation is welcomed for the important and serious work unfolding within the networks.

True added value is in the outward agency/advocacy functions[4]

Many types of networks may be useful and beneficial. However, the area in which the added value is highest and most unique is, by most researchers and studies, found to be in the case of advocacy and outward agency. The underlying reasoning is that by joining forces, the members and the networks receives a unique force that cannot be replaced or substituted by other means (Taschereau, 2007). By

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[4] Relevance of networking and drivers of forming networks is covered in Danida (2006); ICCO, 2004 and Engel (1993) describing upgrading, upstream and upshift drivers for networking in addition to sense of frustration, increased complexity and the global village as factors in networking growth.

comparison many of the support functions and services provided by networks can equally well be taken care of in other ways.

A comprehensive, comparative study of 28 Latin American networks show that by far the most added value originated from learning together and advocacy. These two functions lie at the very heart of networking, other activities are mostly instrumental. However, the priority given by network members to either learning or advocacy may vary greatly, for example between continents and countries." (ICCO, 2004,6)

Networks as ideal for learning

The relative significance of added value for support and advocacy functions respectively may be levelling out, as several paradigms underline that "networking is the most attractive and effective form of learning". This rests on the assumption that learning and knowledge acquisition is basically a social process. However, this perspective does not factor in questions of efficiency and the capacity to participate in social networks for learning. As experience shows, many networks do not advance learning very effectively.

Nevertheless, ICCO coins it the following way: "We would like to postulate that learning-oriented networks represent civil society's answer to the challenges of the emerging knowledge society"(ICCO, 2004: 16).

Also within the corporate world, learning is often considered a social construction process that unfolds best in informal networks: "What is learned is profoundly linked to the conditions under which it is learned. Knowledge creation occurs in the context of a community, one that is fluid and evolving rather than tightly bound or static. The canonical formal organization, with its bureaucratic rigidities, is a poor vehicle for learning. Sources of innovation do not reside exclusively inside firms; instead, they are commonly found in the interstices between firms, universities, research laboratories, suppliers, and customers (…). Consequently, the degree to which firms learn about new opportunities is a function of the extent of their participation in such activities" (Powel, 1996, 118).

From this perspective, the choice of networks within the Danida Civil Society Strategy as the modality for learning, competence development and capacity development is spot on.

The question is, can the quality of learning in networks in any way be said to be better in the networks that encompass both agency and support functions? In other words, is learning around advocacy strategies better facilitated by actually acting in unison on an advocacy campaign while learning and reflecting on the process? It is probably hard to argue that the CD and learning for improved performance is best achieved in the networks that do not engage in agency – especially in the light of decades of documentation on action-learning. INTRAC is very clear in arguing that learning is a developmental process that integrates thinking and doing (www.intrac.org/Praxisinterchange) and in this perspective the learning would also benefit from a more action/agency-oriented perspective of the Danish Networks. It is also relevant in the future to consider if more links between the Danish CD Networks and the Alliance programmes would be beneficial. The Alliance programmes are intended to facilitate testing, experimentation and operationalisation. The rationale need to be revisited for maintaining the separation of CD confined to Denmark and the testing abroad.

However, whether action learning is a suitable vehicle for learning depends a lot on the composition of networks. In homogeneous networks with bonding features the action learning is more feasible, than in very heterogeneous networks with bridging features (Taschereau, 2007). Again, the preoccupation with differentiation (and preference for differentiation) in earlier Danish NGO Network Reviews needs to be reconsidered in light of this.

When learning in networks is given many attributes, it is also because a practice has developed of employing a number of learning sets and methods. Not necessarily methods exclusively designed for networks, but which works particularly well in learning networks: reflective teams, action learning sets, coaching, etc. The Danish Networks have recently started to explore these formats more. However, the question is if the present circle of participants is more interested in mini-projects and therefore an emphasis on the above learning processes and reflection could possibly imply a change in the circle of participants. Clearly, the above described learning processes presume a certain disposition at the personal and professional level and preparedness to be challenged – the so-called 'daring to share'.

Secondly, learning in networks is praised due to the ability to benefit from new information technology - in retrieval, processing and sharing of information and knowledge. The revolution in information technology goes hand in hand with the increase in networking activities at all levels. The Danish Centre for Management has, in a survey among Danish top directors, found that networks are given high priority as *the learning modality for the future* (Hjalager, 2007). The Danish Networks each have their homepages, but advanced electronic form of knowledge sharing have not been much used. All evaluations and reviews have noted that this field is too little developed. The recent initiative on joint Internet portal has been met with mixed reactions.

The Danish Networks are established with the purpose of engaging in advocacy together, but they are sharing lessons on how to do advocacy. The "No-go" area of advocacy and agency for the Danish Networks may imply that they cut themselves off from more dynamic action-oriented forms of learning. It is somewhat of a paradox that the Danish NGOs are defined as support networks with the aim of enhancing capacity as advocacy organisations, and the first rule of advocacy work is to join networks to enhance agency!

In a future scenario it could be envisaged that the advocacy group of Thematic Forum became engaged in, supported and learned from a future advocacy initiative.

2.3. Successes and outcomes

Recent network studies group the success factors in the following four categories (ICCO, 2004; Tascherau, 2007):

• Factors relating to the success of the joint efforts in pursuing established objectives;
• Factors relating to the capacity and disposition of network participants;
• Factors relating to the management and governance of networking activities;
• Factors related to funding and the role of donors.

Relevance, focus and value added is highlighted as the most important. Participation is next and the study stresses what participants can do to make networks successful:
- Daring to Share
- Capacity to give, take and translate
- Commitment.

For the agency networks the successes are normally gauged by the attainment or progress towards achieving a specific impact or change within society – e.g. ban on landmines or informed consent for HIV/Patients. For learning networks, the success criteria in CD for members are generally much more weakly defined and like OD it risks becoming a never ending process (Lund Madsen, 2005).

As the Danish Networks are support networks their target of improving performance is achieved indirectly through the transmission and adoption mechanisms or bridges from network to member. However, reviews, evaluations and studies have confirmed again and again that – despite some efforts – the mechanisms for institutionalising the learning and establishing bridges to the member organisations are too weak (Lund Madsen, 2006; Danida, 2006). Consultations indicate that also in the public sector little attention is given to the organisational implications and impact of networking[5].

The many evaluations and reviews undertaken of the Danish NGO Networks reach very positive conclusions with regard to the Networks instrumental role in building competence among member organisations. They are praised for their relevance, for their smooth running, for the knowledge products developed, and for delivering according to the multi-year plans submitted to Danida.

However, evaluations and reviews have not systematically considered the outcomes in terms of changed behaviour, relationships or actions among members, let alone if the education programmes of member organisations education programmes or HIV/AIDS programmes significantly improved and delivered better results in the South. Thus the very first question of this scenario study cannot be easily answered: "When and how have the networks contributed most to improving the quality of the Danish NGOs work and performance"?

The answers to this question, synthesised by the Network Coordinators (Annex VI), highlight many important and encouraging examples of "how and when", but the link to improved organisational performance is not as yet established. Some of the positive experiences selected for this synthesis of positive experiences often relate to the networks being catalysts – albeit not responsible - for an agency or advocacy function – which perhaps indicates an urge, as the networks mature, to move out of the inward looking CD perspective towards interaction with society and making their voices heard.

In all cases the successes depend on the purposes established for the network and the successes are not automatically achieved within networks. "But some networks don't work. Access can be varied, interaction meagre, influence marginal and sustainability problematic There still remains limited systematic understanding of when, why and how they function best for policy impact in international development" (ODI, 2005: v)

Diversity is, by some evaluators, seen as a fundamental characteristic of networking and almost a precondition of success. However, networks may be designed both by heterogeneous actors as well as homogenous actors. Success for the network is the right match of purpose, contextual conditions, capabilities and member needs and motivation.

There is clearly scope for investigating and exploring evaluation methodologies of the Danish Networks, which encompass the relational and the impact perspective and also for undertaking joint thematic evaluations. New functions of the Networks within evaluation management could also be considered thereby contributing to increased independence of the evaluation management and the furthering of best practices.

2.4. Capabilities, functions or the art of networking

Previous studies of the Danish NGO Network have presented a number of typical networking functions, some of which correspond to the capabilities described in the Network Framework on page 5. Supplementing these capabilities, Ramaligam outlines a number of key functions in the following way - they may be dominant or co-existing:

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[5] Consultation with Gert Rosenkvist

Figure 3: Key functions in networks and of different types of network

FUNCTIONS	CORRESPONDING STEREO TYPES
Filters 'decide' what information is worth paying attention to and organise unmanageable amounts of information.	A NGO Filter Type is for example, the Development Executive Group is an international forum, which provides and exchanges information on project and employment opportunities.
Amplifiers 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 Fair-Trade Foundation, for instance, works though a network of those licensed to use the brand to amplify the fair trade message.
Convenors 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.
Facilitators 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.
Community builders 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.
Investor/providers offer a means to give members the resources they need to carry out their main activities.	The African Capacity Building Foundation, for instance, provides technical assistance, skills and funding to its policy research partners.

Source: Adapted from Ben Ramaligam, 2006

Probably all networks need to have a minimum of all functions within the network to thrive and develop. Recent discussions within the European network SCEP (Separated Children in Europe Programme) clarified that the above functions could very well be taken care of by various members according to their comparative advantages. This would not only reduce the burdens on the secretariat, but also foster the networking itself as the various tasks would bring members into connection with each other, and thus nourish the decentralised and web-nature of the network. Some members were also very instrumental as providers and investors, while others, in financial terms, were mainly receivers. The discussions also clarified that the above dimensions were useful for progress and review purposes[6].

Wogn mentions that there are two basic incitements at play in networks – reward and recognition – and facilitators need to work consciously with these incentives. Unlike in the formal organisation where a range of formal procedures and agreements regulate the behaviour and motivation of the staff, network members are completely free from any bonds and their contribution rests on their motivation often triggered by reward or recognition (Nielsen, 2007).

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[6] SCEP Network Strategy Planning Seminar in Warsaw 2006 facilitated by Hanne Lund Madsen

It is interesting to note that topical discussions on the art of networking and learning in networks has been relatively limited, despite the large expertise and experience available within other sectors and internationally. Nor has there been any investment in the Coordinators regarding networking competencies. It is promising to see that The Danish Child and Youth NGO Network is planning a training course on coaching as an instrument for learning, and it would be relevant to discuss how coaching and reflective teams itself could become one of the key working modalities of the networks. No doubts, the Networks have in practice experienced both ups and downs in networking, which over time has prompted various initiatives such as study trips to networks in England and most recently this study.

Experiences from networking in the United States indicate that the art of networking is now being upgraded to *'version two'* to use a computer metaphor[7]. The past practice of convening people in networks in order to identify ideas and joint activities is replaced by networking on the basis of ideas, which people and organisations gather around. The velocity is high as constellations emerge around new ideas. Networking is about organisational culture. People and organisations enter networks in the realisation that networks provide access to what they cannot name or even plan for. Networking has also moved from engaging only the human resource managers to entering into the Board Rooms of the institutions and organisations treasuring intelligence and a position ahead of the curve.

Contagion

A key concept in network analysis and in organisational change is "contagion" – often described as the pattern by which information, beliefs or behaviors are transferred and diffused through a network. Thus contagion is crucial for learning and support networks. Examples often include how new methods are diffused and adopted within various organisations or firms where traditional vehicles of formal training etc. has not been used. Taking relational perspectives as a starting point, influence is applied through repeated interaction, leading to shared opinions among strongly connected individuals and viewed from a positional perspective, shared views emerge from people playing similar roles (Zack, 2000).

Closely related to contagion is the idea of bandwagon mechanisms, which denotes transfer mechanisms by way of constructive group pressure and 'wanting to be like the rest in the (NGO) community'.

The evaluation of the Danish Education NGO Network notes that the Network should consider ways whereby best practice develops and is copied, and suggests that more insight into the processes of contagion and bandwagon could also provide completely new working methods and methods of diffusion to those presently being exercised. Part of such approach could include providing counselling and advice to the pilot organisation – a service which the networks are currently not allowed to provide, but which the NGO Counselling Service can provide.

Facilitation and leadership of networks

It is now generally agreed that regarding capabilities, the quality and nature of facilitation is key to bringing out the true successes of networks and enabling members to share, give, take and make commitments for change[8]. Some claim that networks cannot survive and develop without professional facilitation.[9] Experience shows that self-facilitation is indeed possible, gradual development and reorintation can take place without facilitation, and duration can be around 10 years for non-facilitated

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[7] Consultation with Wogn (www.wogn.dk)
[8] Consultation with Gert Rosenkvist
[9] Hansen-Skovmoes, Peter: Presentation on Network Facilitation and Reflection in Teams, DJØF 2004)

networks. This in particular applies to homogenous networks with high levels of bonding and where the members themselves hold certain facilitation and reflection skills.

Network facilitation is seen as demanding a lot of process facilitation, and in Denmark professional network facilitation is a growing service in high demand. Facilitation of networks requires first and foremost competence within process management and facilitation and knowledge about how networks work, while expertise or past experience in the professional (technical) fields in question is of lesser importance. However, a certain technical knowledge will make it more easy for the facilitator to understand the topics and the processes within the network[10].

A proverb goes that 'knowledge cannot be managed, only enabled'. Practical guidelines on the Five Knowledge Enablers have been developed: Instilling a knowledge vision; managing conversations; mobilizing "knowledge activists;" creating the right context for knowledge creation; and globalizing local knowledge" (Nonaka, 2000).

Past Reviews of the Networks (Danida, 2006; Nielsen, 2006) show very high satisfaction levels with the work of the Coordinators. The reviews also call for an upgrading of the facilitation skills and for giving less emphasis on the skills in the particular professional/technical area, be it education or gender. If that line of argument is fully accepted, there is, in principle, no need for a specific network coordinator for each network. The facilitation can be outsourced to network facilitators and process consultants. However, some consider the technical expertise offered by the Network Coordinators as indispensable for the network's added value, and future scenarios would benefit from articulating the knowledge vision of the networks. The recent seminar on "What has happened to the professionalism and technical expertise in development cooperation"[11] underlined the need for specialist knowledge of high professional standards within prioritised areas. It also called for considering competence development and services in a global context rather than in a Danish context only.

The need for facilitators to nurse the network dynamics and the learning processes, together with stimulating and invigorating networking sessions, have been highlighted several times. Ramilingam's Tool for Knowledge and Sharing, 2006, provides ideas in this regard. Some of the multi-module training programmes of the Networks including peer reviews and coaching have been evaluated very positively.

The ECDPM study emphasises the crucial importance of leadership of networks and especially leadership with vision, credibility and legitimacy to convene and mobilise in pursuit of a vision. Leadership is normally seen as indispensable in advocacy networks and advocacy often attracts higher attention at the senior management level – simply because leadership of the member organisations is more directly involved – either in voicing the advocacy concerns to the public, or in taking decisions about the profile of campaigns, etc. Generally, leadership offers less attention to knowledge and learning networks. Knowledge and support networks may, at the time of establishment, be the results of a deliberate move from senior management, but their day to day functioning mainly engages staff and middle managers and attracts little attention of the leadership. The concern expressed by the coordinators of the Danish NGO networks regarding the attention and leverage from the NGO leadership may thus be put into perspective as part of a more general trend, as well as related to the de-linking of support and advocacy.

Networks are not easy to lead and very different to lead than an organisation. Other tools and perspective as needed when leading engagement on a voluntary basis than on a contractual basis

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[10] Consultation with HOLST-GRYCH
[11] Seminar held by U-landsfagligt Selskab, 25th October 2007, Copenhagen.

(Anders la Cour).[12] The image of an antenna with two-way communication, high visibility but low interference, slim but solid foundation, clear circumference and with the ability to connect irrespective of time and space could be an image of the leadership of networks

The Steering Committees of the Danish Networks are in principle there to both coordinate and lead. It would be interesting in a future scenario for the Steering Committees to consider if and how they could enhance their leadership of the voluntary element prominent within the networks. This would initially imply consideration of how the Steering Committees could drive forward and instill joint knowledge visions and joint visions about the levels of impact of the networks. It would also imply exploring the leadership styles and tools suggested by Anders la Cour and other writers on this subject.

2.5. Structures - organisation or organism?

The dimension of organisation or organism was addressed in the Network Review 2006. The literature acknowledges the existence of network organisations with two differing definitions. The first relates to a traditional hierarchical organisation or company having been reformed to work as network organisations. The second refers to organisations that were born as networks with multiple memberships. At the international level we see many such human rights network organisations, agricultural network organisations, etc. Also in the field of support and capacity development we see many network organisations.

There is no rule saying that the network organism or the network organisation is the better choice. It all depends on the purpose, member profile, etc. Past reviews of the Danish NGOs networks have expressed concern about the high level of organisation, and recommended more organism and fluidity. (Danida, 2006; Nielsen, 2007) The Reviews have studied networks, which all conform to the Danida guidelines and requirements for financing and this has in part shaped this finding. Past reviews have not assessed the informal, auto-piloted and non-financed networks that have existed in the *'undergrowth'* of the Danish development community with high levels of organism, flexibility and adaptation to changing contexts. One example is Arena for Organisational Development.

However, what is really key is that the Steering Committees, Coordinators and the Members are alert to the pro and cons of each modality and are ready to tackle the drawbacks, respond with appropriate mitigation measures and nurture the driving forces within each model. For example, in the network organism one challenge is that structure is to be created simultaneously with the process and the product. In the network organisation with higher levels of formalisation the challenge is to avoid stifling, business as usual, and the network organisation becoming an end in itself.

For whose sake?

A general development tendency of networks is that the network develops a life of its own as it gradually matures and grows. The formalisation and institutionalisation that may be beneficial in many respects also risks destabilising the balance or the initial agreements leading to the establishment of the networks. The node of the network becomes the owner and the network secretariat sometimes almost invisibly moves from facilitating to orchestrating[13]. A gradual move beyond purely CD and knowledge sharing to that of wanting to take joint action, develop identity as an agency, etc. is another common development. However, as noted above, the real change from one to the other requires a

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[12] Presentation by Anders la Cour, Copenhagen Business School: "Leadership in voluntary organisations and associations". Organised by Arena for Organisational Development, 2004.
[13] Consultation with Alan Fowler

rebirth of the network with new mandates and powers, codes of conduct etc. and power sharing with the existing members.

Among the Danish Networks this gradual development has, according to some observers, been quite pronounced. While the member participation has been significant, the Networks have had to orchestrate and drive ahead new action plans and proposals. The Networks themselves have noted the increased saturation, lower attendance at important annual seminars and inadequate critical mass in several working groups. The latest needs assessment report noted that the challenge is to get enough people on board, and recommends that "the Steering Committee provides resources to the Secretariat in order to support the first round recruitment to working groups" and that strategically important issues should be cultivated and then handed over to working groups when the time is ripe. (Thematic Forum, 2007).

From another perspective a prime objective of the Networks could be seen as driving forward and nursing strategic initiatives and be agenda setting. Again this function requires the mandate of an agency type network to really succeed. In a future visioning of the Networks it will be relevant to decide on the responsive versus the driving profile of the networks.

Networks as joint capacity development projects?

There are plenty of examples of networks being confused with alliances or project cooperation in new fields such as CD[14]. Establishing a joint project on CD among likeminded NGOs could be very relevant and justified. However, when opting for a network model it is normally due to the desire to enjoy and cultivate some of the distinguishing features of networking as compared to project or programme cooperation.

Annex IV gives a matrix presentation of the differences between networking and project cooperation, and although the borderlines are fluid, it is clear that both have strengths depending on the purpose it is to serve. It is a paradox that in the 1980's everybody wanted to do project work, even though few knew what it entailed. Over the years project work has become very familiar. But today everybody opts for a network and again not all master the art of networking. Thus there is a tendency to run networks like projects.

One of the key issues for the Danish Networks appears to be located in the set-up of the networks as "projects", with all the implications of predetermined objectives, indicators, activity types, time-lines, etc. where there is a great risk that the members are instrumental in attaining the goals of the network and not vice versa. And a risk that the emphasis on joint projects undermines the added value of networking.

Interestingly, the evaluation of the Danish Education NGO Network finds that the network is very good at ad hoc Mini-projects with well-defined aims and seems to encourage more of this. (Nielsen, 2006)

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[14] A recurrent discussion in the literature is the difference between building the capacity of networks (primarily within agency) and achieving capacity development in or through networking. However, for the Danish Networks the purpose has clearly been on creating a conducive environment for learning among members. With no agency or advocacy functions the question of enhancing the capacity of the networks to perform (in their own name) has not been in focus. What has been in focus is the capabilities of the network to cultivate the features and processes cherished in networking – here the profile of the facilitator and the disposition of the participants regarding Motive, Means and Opportunities (MMO) are important.

When looking at the new proposals and action plans of the Danish Networks, the objectives are described at the level of network activities and not at the level of achievements to be obtained by the member organisations.

This observation is supported by the finding that the Danish Networks (and the Network Reviews too) have mainly been preoccupied with what took place in the network, and less with the changes that network participation brought about in member organisations. Outcomes of networking have only recently been discussed in terms of changed behaviour, relationships and actions among members. This is closely connected to the viability of networks addressed on page 21.

Path dependency

Path dependency concerns the tendency that past decisions, successes and praxis forms play an important role for present options and possibilities. Also within networks there are certain development paths, paradigms and institutional factors at play. These dependencies are very important for the scope and depth of innovation and learning[15].

From another angle ECDPM addresses the issue of path dependency as the 'straight road to death'. They caution against model network or blueprint strategies. It is noted 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' (Taschereau, 2007, 19)

Many evaluation reports of Danish NGO Networks have noted the surprisingly conventional and uniform set-up and structure of the Danish Networks. There is clearly a need for closer examination of the phenomenon of path-dependency within the Danish Networks, both the informal and intangble perceptions that flourish about networking and the formal and institutional arrangements, which Danida guidelines represent.

The financial aspect of path-dependency is also crucial. The past pre-occupation with getting Danida funds and providing no own direct contributions have in turn meant that most networking activities unfold within the Danida model. The question is, has the Danida model in fact, unintentionally, turned the networks into projects and has the path-dependency ring-fenced the types of innovation that are possible?

It goes without saying that true visioning of future scenarious implies daring to look beyond past path-dependency.

Bonding and bridging

In heterogeneous networks a main factor is that of bridging – bridging cultural differences, institutional differences, class divisions, professional disciplines, etc.

In homogeneous networks where the members are very similar the main process is characterised as bonding and creating a community with high levels of trust, ties, etc. It takes place in small size communities where every one knows each other by name. In bonded networks the access of new external actors is less easy, and a tendency of closed minds towards the outside may appear, which in

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[15] Training course "Innovation in Networks" at CBS. (ke@ipl.dtu.dk - Kasper Edwards, CBS)

turn may limit inspiration and innovation. However, the bonding may also be very productive as a secure platform for experimentation, knowledge sharing and constructive self-critique. Trust, being so important for networks to flourish, is indicative of the importance of a certain level of homogeneity and bonding.

There is no basis for concluding that the one is more valuable or attractive than the other. Nor is there a basis for considering heterogeneous networks more productive than homogeneous. The crucial issue is that the purpose matches the membership and level of diversity. Past reviews of the Danish NGO Thematic Networks have clearly spoken in favour of heterogeneous networks with characteristics of bridging (Danida, 2006, 8; Nielsen, 2007) and the same assumption is reproduced in the new Danida guidelines (Danida, 2006b).

If the NGOs really want to explore new modalities and diversity in competence development it would be interesting to question the rationale of keeping all Danida training separate from NGO training and keeping the training undertaken by Danida Fellowship Centre separate from both Danida Staff and Danish NGOs; and to explore if just some of the training would benefit from engaging the actors that are to cooperate in reality around development changes.

Boundaries and exclusiveness or openness and accessibility?

Networks are often supposed to be very open and very permeable social structures. However, the cluster of people or organisations in a particular relational pattern could not exist without a form of outward boundary. The whole notion of network membership implies a process of distinction and setting of boundaries. The objective of the network functions as a compass, as a boundary and as a protection mechanism against moving in all possible directions. These boundaries are in fact key in identifying the network and differentiate it from other networks.

Some argue that to make networks work they need to be perceived as attractive and prestigious by the members. Restrictive membership, careful selection, by nomination or by merit, and a sense of being chosen are important tools in fostering and branding the network[16]. Others attach little importance to this type of 'jet-setting' the networks, and underline the true quality and outcome of the interaction in the network as decisive[17]. ECDPM, in their recent research, very much underline openness as crucial for learning and cross-fertilisation, also with other networks and knowledge streams. Fowler, as also mentioned already by Nielsen 2004, stresses the importance of getting the right people on board, as the utility and value of the networks stands or falls on members as sources of useful information to be shared (Fowler, 1997). However, the extent to which the openness has in fact reduced commitment and ownership is little explored and talking about identification of the "right" members could easily run into a number of taboos.

The Danish Networks are in some ways very open in that anybody can walk in and participate in the meetings; and semi-closed in that they target Danish Development NGOs. The question who are the 'right and best' participants has not been posed directly, but rephrased as difficulties of meeting the needs of full time educational specialists within a large NGO and at the same time a volunteer in a small privately run charity initiative. In a future scenario it could be useful to consider if the networks could work on both dimensions of bonding and bridging.

Personal or organisational networks?

Networks may of course be either personally or organisationally driven. The question is whether the organisationally driven network is still to be considered as working only at the personal level with the

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[16] Consultation with HOLST-GRYCH
[17] Consultation with Gert Rosenkvist

members involved in the network? The experience of HOLST-GRYCH is that networking unfolds at the personal/professional level and the change is achieved at the individual level and in the individual's preparedness and capabilities to initiate change within their own organisation. Rosenkvist supports the findings of earlier studies (Lund Madsen 2005) that many networks are established and justified with reference to organisational changes, but that the transmission mechanisms between the individual participant and the organisational change processes are poorly explored.

Clearly, it is important for any network to decide the level of intended change, which may not only facilitate the achievements of the same, but also spare many frustrations and disappointed expectations.

There are indications that the Danish NGO Networks have been skating between different expectations as to the level of change, which in turn have at times created tensions. Some of the bigger NGOs may have more than 6 different entry points for networking as the participation in the networks are dependent on the staff's technical profile/responsibilities. The attention of the NGO leadership to the Networks has been a contested field. Recent studies and the present consultations confirm that many member organisations have not made a commitment on achieving certain organisational changes facilitated through the participation in networks, and that the participants often acted in their own capacity. At the same time recent studies confirm that appreciation of network participation at the personal/professional level is significant, but the increasing number of networks has prompted the organisations to consider where to use their time and resources. As a possible explanation of why some leaders may not as yet consider networks a top priority at the organisation level, Wogn suggests that leaders tend to confuse their own leadership networks, which is a 'private initiative', with learning networks, which ought to be an organisational measure. Recent surveys show that Danish directors in the public sector primarily use networks for emotional support (Hjalager, 2007).

In the upgraded *version two*, networking is close to the heart of the organisation. It implies leadership and strategic decisions around networking, encouraging a networking culture within the organisation, considering networking as a dimension in recruitment and staff development appraisals, and in the overall strategic five year plans of the organisation. 'Waterholes' in different locations and of different scale is made available – right from the access to marketing ideas, to facilities for holding ad-hoc meetings and training, to support from a process consultant right to access to decision makers.

The above has highlighted a number of structures, processes and dynamics that can inspire contemplation of the third question: Which structures and processes can be used in networks - in particular structures other than the present dominant model? The international comparative perspective will moreover provide more ideas on structures.

2.6. Power in networks

In network analysis three aspects of power are addressed: Prominence, range and brokerage. Prominence reflects the hierarchical status of an individual. It is a measure for the centrality of an individual, or a network, based on the demand for linking to a node - the degree to which ties are directed to one node at the expense of all others. Range reflects discretion to act. The greater the range of one's ties, the more resources and views one has access to, and the less dependent one is on particular ties. Finally, brokerage reflects the ability to exploit "holes" in a social network by connecting nodes that formerly have not been connected. By measuring the extent of 'holes' in a knowledge-sharing network structure, for example, before and after implementing a knowledge management method, it may be possible to gauge the impact of the method on the 'markets of

knowledge exchange". Brokerage indicates not only opportunities to exploit the method but also points of resistance that may arise by those currently filling a brokerage role (Zack, 2000).

It has been suggested, that even in networks where members enter on equal terms, the dynamics within the network and the transactions taking place will inevitably imply that 'wealth and power' graviates towards some members, who clearly finds the added value more significant than others.(RAPID, 2005c)

Also INTRAC notes that communication and knowledge can be tools of power and that there is a need for exploring the politics of knowledge and how this impacts on capacity building (www.intrac.org/ praxisinterchange).

Currently, the Danish Networks have not considered the three aspects of power within the networks and how it influences innovation, control or learning.

However, the consultations in networks which the consultant has taken part in clearly indicate that these are nevertheless at play. The risk that the larger organisations dominate often surfaces and the resistance to being repeatedly exposed to the best practices of the larger organisations is voiced. The larger organisations, on their part, often refer to their supportive role within the networks due to their resources and expertise, which concur with certain responsibilities. The member organisations also often indirectly praise each other in terms of prominence, range and brokerage. The centre of power is often described as being located outside the Networks - in the NGO Forum or in Danida- and yet the confidence in the informal power of the participants in the networks is also significant.

For a future scenario it is warranted to look much more in depth at how these three aspects of power can be developed for the betterment of learning and change.

Innovation or control?

In homogeneous networks within small communities the cherished innovation capacity of networks may be threatened or reduced by social control. So while networks may create innovation and new knowledge, they may also establish norms and codex, which function as controls. In the designed control functions – such as codes of conduct and quality standards – the control is a positive and desired result. In the case of unarticulated and invisible control mechanisms, '*jantelov*' – rule of the fittest, etc. it is clearly a barrier to achieving the aims of the network. This is closely related to path-dependency.

It is relevant for the Networks to recognise the dynamics between innovation and control and be able to mitigate or exploit as relevant the power dynamics always at play within networks.

Corporation or turf struggles?

Networking is no exception from the rule that competition is healthy. Healthy competition can even co-exist with different forms of cooperation, as long as the unique product of the networks is not undermined by the cooperation. However, turf struggles are just as common as healthy competition and cooperation (Simmons, 1998). Due to the 'soft' incentive of reward and recognition, the open boundaries of networks, the participation challenge etc. turf struggles are in fact common among networks – in other words turf struggles denote the power dynamics among networks.

Simmons coins it this way: "Creative spirits, motivated enthusiasts, and innovative drivers become the casualties of an organizational turf war. Once people start wrangling for a territorial advantage, pushing their hidden agendas, and under-cutting their peers, no one is focused on organizational goals. The turf war mentality lowers our sights and we waste valuable time and effort crushing an enemy

who could be, and should be on our side. We lose too many valuable resources to the "friendly fire" of organisational turf wars". Many network ideas and initiatives suffer the silent death of ignorance due to considerations of organisational turf and path dependency. Simmons suggests that one good way to unlock the stalemate, or the struggle, is to investigate what organisations or individuals are doing when they do not cooperate or are unwilling to listen. And compare the gains.

In the Danish NGO network the collegial spirit does not appear to be characterised by competition nor by turf struggles. On the contrary - the Networks have early on seen the advantages of cooperation and established:

- Joint training and seminars
- Joint IT portal
- Joint Intranet meetings both among Coordinator and among Steering Committees
- Joint discussions of Danida policy initiatives or reviews
- Joint study on future scenarios of networking

Moreover, around 30 % of the membership circle is identical in the various networks. However, consultations indicate that among the member organisations and the organisations hosting the Networks, a certain competition for the reward and recognition that networking can offer is naturally evident. Branding and prestige are at stake. Both in establishing networks and in the resistance to dismantling them. Reservations towards becoming too entangled in networks are linked to considerations of independence and comparative advantages. The drastic cuts in the support to NGOs have made the struggle for survival more pronounced, and on the streets the NGOs compete for the attention of the Danish public. The Networks have been closely monitored by Danida and advised not to take on too much a role of their own, and some critics find that the networks are developing as new power centres, which was not the intention.

Competition is also an acknowledged fact in relation to the participation challenge of the Networks. The number and nature of the Networks has implied that the saturation point is about to be reached – if not already reached – and there is more on offer than the members can digest. Moreover, the Network Coordinators note that the present conditions of operation compel them to compete for the attention and leverage of influential NGO Directors. Finally, the deliberations at the Thematic Day[18] highlighted that the increased competition created dilemmas with regard to sharing and learning together

From another perspective, networks are one means to help defend the turf of the overall collective NGO development community, and to harness the quality and lasting results for the poor, which are indispensable for survival, development and the maintenance of a cutting edge of the NGOs.

A narrow path?

Summarising the observations above, there are many indications that the Danish Networks, contrary to the idea of networking with few strings attached and open avenues, have had to walk a very narrow path and continuously had to avoid the many 'no-go areas' due to path dependency, financial modes, avoidance of overlaps, no mandate for agency functions, project type regulation and institutional sanctuaries.

So while the context at the time of establishment in many ways offered a vacuum that the Networks could fill and explore, the Networks have in reality been squeezed from many frontiers. The active members have been very loyal to the mandate and little trespassing has been reported. The Steering Groups and Coordinators have been very disciplined and preoccupied with maintaining good relations

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[18] In connection with the revision of the Danida Civil Society Strategy a Thematic Day Seminar was held 10th October 2007.

with all the various stakeholders in order to sustain the successes of the network and the support so crucial to their viability.

From another perspective, the narrow path may be a sign that the Networks have managed to define their operations very specifically and avoided a burgeoning in all directions. The Networks have been loyal to the tasks, which the members could identify as the common denominator and have taken care to act within the agreed borders between the NGO community and the individual organisation.

In any case, it is a relevant to ask if the life of networking and the virtues treasured in networking can continue unfolding within a narrow path surrounded by no-go areas?

2.7. Sustainability or life expectancy?

The Fourth Focus Question (How can the sustainability of the networks be ensured in the long run?) reflects another preoccupation of the Networks funded, as they are, by donor funds. The five Networks have received more than 19 mill DKK since the first started in 2003. For the three years 2007 – 2009 there is a total Danida budget of 28 mill DKK for Danish NGO Networks. Presently around 10-12 mill DKK of this budget is awaiting allocation.

The ICCO network study notes, "The golden rule for success is letting a network start from its own resources. Initial self-reliance guarantees continuity (see also: Engel, 1993). This doesn't mean that no funding resources for the networking activities are needed. But funding must not be the reason why NGOs decide to join a network" (ICCO, 2004, 9).

On the other hand funding issues may also be the reason why organisations stay out of networks. Some of the implications of various financial models are illustrated below:

Figure 4: Financing Models

Financing Model	Advantages	Disadvantages
Fully Sponsored Network – An organisation/company pays all expenses to the network	Provides solid economic base Good for longer-term planning	Poor ownership and engagement Donor conditionalities regarding composition, aims, activities etc.
Partly Sponsored Network – The majority is sponsored by an organisation/donor – the participants pay a fee	Maintains solid economic base, longer term planning and participants are more committed when paying for the product	Fees may exclude some Sponsor conditions may clash with other payers conditions
50/50 financing – A common model in public support schemes – network own contribution may be in the form of labour contribution, etc.	Balances network and sponsor interests Access to funds beyond the capacity of members	Perceived as "for free" due to no monetary contribution; Hard to mobilise own contribution. Evaluation still needed to satisfy donor
Participant Payment – All costs are covered by the members	High commitment and level of influence	Fees may exclude those that really could nourish the network Economic barriers to many activities

Source: Adapted from Nielsen, 2007.

The ICCO Report moreover highlights that most networks would not have taken place without some financial resources, and that most network literature stresses the need for at least 'seed money' during the preparation and establishing phase. Providing project funding for networks – activity based and short term – is not conducive for networks: "Taking into account the time needed to mature as a network (5-10 years) this means that funding stops at the moment a network is becoming productive. Lack of funding at this time, may lead to inactivity of the network and loss of initial investments in time, energy and money" (ICCO; 2004:12).

This line of argumentation clearly puts the case for continued Danida support. At the same time it puts the case for much more room for maturation of the networks as they grow and perhaps change character and core drivers. Providing longer-term support based on a fixed and static networking model would thus be counter-productive.

The ICCO report is very articulate about donor preparedness to support learning networks: "Donors should recognise this central role of networking initiatives in boosting the knowledge base, learning processes and the civil society actors' capacity to generate and advocate proposals, and relate their funding to the relative importance they attach to it. Capacity development, institution-building, advocacy and societal change, to name just a few, are unthinkable without a considerable investment in improving networking and learning among relevant development actors. Donors should invest in learning-oriented networking amongst their partners because they want to enable civil society both globally and locally to play a strong role in shaping the ideas and knowledge that determine our future. Besides, such investments are vital to sustain their own learning; sponsoring learning-oriented networking can not be lacking in donors' global knowledge for development strategies". (ICCO, 2004, 16)

At the same time, the idea of providing own direct funds to the networks have often surfaced during the consultations, arguing that this would be healthy for the networks – both in terms of ensuring ownership and more independence, but also in attracting the attention called for from the NGO directors. Moving the Networks onto the budgets of the NGOs is thus expected to draw more strategic attention of the leadership to the Networks. The joint appraisal of financial models initiated by the Network Coordinators argues against the introduction of membership fees. Especially the introduction of fees just for the sake of prioritisation is rejected.

The paper provides a solid appraisal of the various possibilities and suggests that alternatives should be explored, such as volunteer contributions (which is similar to the investor/provider function mention on page 11) or external fundraising beyond Danida. In the true spirit of networking it would also be relevant to consider if funding in the traditional sense is really needed. Within the alternative economic market the absi system (based on Barth currency) is a strongly growing niche. It is a network of classic exchanges in a modern set-up. The direct terms of trade may not always be equal, but the difference is compensated in Barth currency (www.absi.dk). In fact the financial analysis may help in identifying the areas of cooperation that are best suited for longer term joint programme cooperation with Danida funding, such as training and competence development, and the initiatives more suited to loose informal learning and exchange networks – perhaps even linked to more regular training programmes.

It is relevant to ask how app. 40 mill DKK over a period of 8 years could best be used to stimulate linking and learning, best practices, cutting edge innovation and capacity development within the civil society sector? It is hard to argue that CD networks of a temporary nature should be a supreme modality in all cases, especially considering the long steady pull and strategic commitment needed for really driving capacity development results forward. The mini-scenario workshop indicated that today the Networks would want to pool such resources in a more efficient and effective manner.

An interesting case is the new NGO Leadership Programme developed by Ankerhus[19], which is fully financed by the participating NGOs. It was developed in response to a joint request and addresses learning and competence development among senior NGO management, which is perhaps *the* most important factor for overall CD in the NGO sector today. It may, in the longer run, give basis for networking activities among the participants. It is an example of an independent service provider responding to a CD need among the NGOs. In a future visioning it would be relevant to consider such initiative on equal footing with the technical networks, which mainly engage staff.

The Fourth Focus Question about ensuring sustainability of the networks naturally calls for revisiting the assumption that is it desirable or a virtue for the networks to continue and to be sustainable[20]. However, if networks are a means to an end, the sustainability of the network is not a virtue in itself! As mentioned above the institutionalisation may imply rigidity and thereby erosion of the very same virtues cherished in networks.

Related to life-giving stimuli for networks, Rosenkvist suggests that temporality is an important stimulus, which helps to create the needed attention and energy here and now. Closing down is an important opening for a rebirth in the shape and form most appropriate. The networks that do grow and mature and show strong strengths within a more institutionalised set-up with agreed, time-bound outcomes should naturally persist, but it would probably be more correct to say that the networks thus have given birth to a lasting partnership cooperation among a number of actors. Networks would no longer be the right descriptive term.

Also Keijtzer underlines that "rather than being indicative of a network's inability to sustain itself, the disappearance of a network may be a sign of its vitality and ability to respond to its operating environment" (Keijtzer, 2006, 8). In other cases members simply vote with their feet and move on to other learning opportunities, which is not a defeat but the very philosophy in networking and in open space technology.

The sustainability in non-financial terms is very much related to safeguarding and nourishing the life and the pulse within the network and exploring the distinctiveness and particular virtues of networks. A network is inert when it loses its flexibility and becomes preoccupied with procedures and access to resources.

This takes us to the next question about future scenarios for the relationships between the NGOs in the future – will it materialise as networks, alliances, agreed cooperation on joint competence building or?

Before that we will seek inspiration from a few selected networking modalities in neighbouring countries.

3. NGO NETWORKING IN NEIGHBOUR COUNTRIES

Looking abroad there are plenty of networks that could inspire the Danish Networks. An overwhelming majority of these have advocacy and agency as their raison d'etre. Very many have joint advocacy and support/learning functions. Yet others are purely learning and knowledge sharing networks. Where this is the case these are often initiated, hosted and managed by one organisation, which sees the networks as a strategic important pillar in their knowledge management system. UNDP for example runs HURITALK with moderated discussions, queries etc. which involves UNDP's

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[19] www.ankerhus.dk
[20] The phases in networking is described in Danida, 2006 and in ICCO ,2004 and cover initiation, scoping, operationalisation, consolidation, dissolution or adjustment/rebirth phases.

global system as very many professionals in the human rights and development community. Justice for the Poor, J4P, is a Dgroup jointly initiated by a number of organisations including Bellanet, DFID, Hivos, ICCO, OneWorld, UNAIDS and World Bank. J4P gathers planners and professionals around legal reforms and access to justice systems. MandENews is a portal facilitating knowledge sharing in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) initiated by a specialist in M&E and provides a platform for knowledge sharing. All these knowledge networks are web-based, but clearly draws on the cohesion established in other ways (conferences, trainings, etc).

It is interesting to note that in Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands the support functions co-exist with advocacy and agency. The networks strongly articulate their role in monitoring, in standard setting, in building reciprocal accountability mechanisms, in influencing policy and in nourishing the development of civil society. In those cases where the support functions are run in isolation with emphasis on skills and competence development, professional upgrading within thematic areas, etc. these mainly unfold in competence development centres.

The relatively high level of formalisation into umbrella organisations, alliances or network organisations in turn provides opportunities for engaging in significant and large undertakings – the initiatives of VENRO, Germany, is an example of this. Another interesting finding is the strong South perspective and collaboration.

VENRO and BOND are the two examples that most clearly express a mission around networking from the perspective that networks are about *relationships*. BOND's motto is: "BOND facilitates relationship" and VENRO's motto is: VENRO creates networks. Thereby they present a vision of having a strong epicentre and institutional capacity and at the same time nourishing networks and relationships in many forms.

By comparison, the Danish NGO cooperation landscape appear quite dispersed, more decentralised with few epicentres and vertical dimensions of engagement with policy makers and constituency. The recent codification of the NGO Forum is a first step towards more agency functions and a joint perspective on civil society developments. A closer examination of the experiences in other countries beyond what has been possible within this report will problaby be very stimulating.

Sweden

In Sweden, most of the networks are considered umbrella organisations. Sweden does not hold examples of thematic networks similar to the Danish, but has had several issue-based networks such as the Jubilee Campaign and Make Poverty History. Forum Syd is one of the main networks for Swedish development NGOs and comprises mainly the smaller NGOs not having framework agreement with Sida.

"Forum Syd gathers two hundred Swedish organisations working with international development assistance and the forming of opinion on global issues. Member organisations consist of major popular movements such as Save the Children Sweden and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, as well as small societies run entirely on a voluntary basis. Forum Syd also works with a large number of organisations and networks worldwide. Our common aim is global justice.

Organisations in Sweden have a long tradition of working with the civil society in countries in the Global South and East. The aim of Forum Syd is to strengthen and develop this cooperation. Within the framework of Forum Syd organisations have the opportunity to exchange experiences and increase their own understanding, create new methods for development assistance and cooperate to achieve better results. Forum Syd also stives to impact the policies of the UN, World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) on issues of importance for world development such as trade and debt.

Forum Syd was formed in 1995 and is politically and religiously independent. Operations are largely financed through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), but proportional membership contribution exists". (www.forumsyd.se)

Forum Syd unites the NGOs for three main purposes:
- shaping of public opinion. Cooperation with other organisations to influence people in power on issues related to global justice, conditions for NGO development assistance and the role of civil society in development cooperation.

- capacity building. Arranging meetings, courses and exchanges of experience between people from different networks and organisations in countries in the Global North, South and East. We also produce publications on issues central to development work such as gender, environment, debt and trade.

- channelling of Sida funds. We provide advice and financial support to Swedish organisations that carry out development cooperation and provide information in Sweden on global issues.

The main challenges of Forum Syd are also the main strengths according to Forum Syd. The network has always had to balance between operational involvement in the South while co-existing with member organisations and to channel funds to smaller projects while at the same time representing the members. However, this mixture of direct involvement and responsibility for funding also provides the in-depth understanding of the members and a hands-on approach which complements and nourishes the strategic thinking and competence development. Like Projektrådgivningen they find that their strength lies in a 360° view of members. Stimuli of networking and learning in networks is an area which Forum Syd is keen on developing further.

Another important player within NGO competence development and learning in Sweden – apart from the corporate sector – is the Sida Civil Society Centre in Southern Sweden.

Sida Civil Society Center, SCSC, in Härnösand is a resource centre mainly for NGOs and popular movements. SCSC's objective is to contribute to capacity development of Civil Society's organisations in development cooperation.

SCSC is a part of Sida's department for Cooperation with NGOs, Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Management. The center aims to support development of method as well as responding to the need for capacitybuilding among Sida's cooperative partners.
SCSC gives a large number of courses and seminars to support the organisations' development work. (www.sida.se/scsc)

The competence development needs in Sweden are thus addressed both by the various umbrella organisations and directly by Sida. The SCSC is mainly an organiser of the courses bringing in experts and people and sometimes joint seminars are undertaken with Forum Syd. Roland Stenlund highlights that SCSC seeks to be a true arena for discussion and learning. There is a risk that Sida may be seen as influencing the agenda, but the focus on competence development with no funding responsibilities supports the ability to function as an arena – and in addition an arena that is not linked to a particular NGO or NGO umbrella organisation.

Norway

Three large umbrella organisations Bistandsnemda, Atlas Alliancen and Fokus have both advocacy and competence developing functions. In fact NORAD was instrumental in establishing the umbrella

organisations in the mid 1990s with a view to simplifying administration and to nourish professional and thematic competence building and exchange of experiences[21].

RORG is a national network portal for development information and education.
"The RORG-network (in Norwegian: RORG-Samarbeidet) is a group of Norwegian NGOs doing Development Education (DE) in Norway. RORG is an acronym for the Norwegian word rammeavtaleorganisasjon (RammeavtaleORGanisasjon), meaning an organisation with a framework agreement (rammeavtale) for funding. In this case it refers to framework agreements for funding of DE with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). In 1999 the informal and loose RORG-network was formalised with its own statutes/conventions, outlining its aims, procedures for membership and governing structures.

According to its constitution the aim of the RORG-network is:

* to constitute a forum for debate on DE in Norway and
* to be an arena for strengthened coordination, cooperation, initiatives and mobilisation for the broadest possible range of DE in Norway. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) receives and act on the annual report, decides on policy for the organisation, admits new members and elects a Steering Group. The Steering Group exercise oversight functions in the interim period between AGMs.

In recent years some +/-30 NGOs have benefited from the framework agreements with Norad, of which most have been members of the RORG-network. In 2005 these RORGs received a total of NOK 24 million in Norad-funding for DE." www. rorg.no)

Global is another cooperation framework around North-South information including international environmental and development issues, which encompasses both governmental and non-governmental actors

"Global is owned by Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment and other Norwegian organisations, institutions, actors and public institutions with a mandate related to North-South Cooperation totalling more than 100 partners.

Global is an independent organisation with own statutes. The Annual Meeting selects the Board, which has decision power. The Chief Editor of Global is responsible for the information profile and for the management of Global (www.global.no).

Bistandstorget, also called Norwegian Development Network, is first and foremost a network for competence development and learning. While it in its current shape resembles the Danish Thematic Networks with the focus on competence development, the NDN does not use networking as its mode of operation, but other methodologies for competence development such as training.

NDN is a resource and competence milieu for Norwegian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and other development actors aiming at:

- Directing attention to and questioning the values guiding development assistance.
- Increasing the professional competence of NDN members and other development actors.
- Improving the quality of the development assistance extended by NDN members and other development actors
- Facilitating exchange of experience between NDN members and other development actors. In 2006 NDN had 67 member organisations, i.e. all the large, medium-sized and most small Norwegian development-oriented CSOs. NDN operates with considerable voluntary input from the members. Such input may be in the form of planning implementation and follow-up of seminars, organisation of hearings and evaluations, participation in the Board and Thematic Groups and systematic dissemination of information between the Board/the Secretariat/Thematic groups and member organisations and their board, networks and partners. NDN is financed through membership and seminar participation fees, support from public development authorities and through commissions regarding public hearing and organisation of seminars.

NDN has a three-year agreement of co-operation with Norad (2002-2004), comprising a grant of up to NOK 450 000 per year and an NDN input of 22 per cent.

Over a four-year period (2000 – March 2004) NDN has received support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for competence-raising in the field of evaluation. The annual turnover is approx. NOK 1,5 mill. (www.bistandstorget.no)

The challenge for NDN is on the one hand to provide an arena for policy discussions and articulation of interests and on the other hand to refrain from channeling these views or representing the constituency. The larger members are very alert that NDN refrains from lobbying and advocacy, which they want to undertake themselves, while many of the smaller organisations would like NDN to take on this role where appropriate. NDN is in a process of developing a longer-term and more strategic perspective on competence development and is also seeking more coordination with other actors in this field.

Norad in 2006 called for greater professionalisation of the NGOs and stricter requirements in connection with funding, but specific guidelines in this regard have not been established. The support modality for CSO includes project support and organisational support, and as part of this it is possible to apply for support for competence development. However, Norad sees Bistandstorget, NDN, as the main vehicle for enabling capcity development across the NGO sector. A special appropriation also exists for information and development education. Norad do not make sharp distinctions between information work and advocacy and the Norad support is naturally also used for lobby and advocacy functions. All information work is naturally undertaken with a view to influence public opinion, views of the government institutions or political parties. Norad stresses that advocacy is a fundamental role of CSO in a democratic society and it should be encouraged and accepted not only in the South but also in the North.

Great Britain

As mentioned above the CSO, in the field of competence development, are benefiting from a high mobility between research and practice and from many research institutes having framework agreements with DFID allowing for innovative action research of relevance to the NGO sector. Moreover, organisations like INTRAC have provided the CSO with strategic thinking, intelligence services, platforms for reflection and on-going training opportunities both in the basics of development programming and in the most recent trends and modalities. INTRAC is a non-profit organisation established in 1991 working in the international development and relief sector. INTRAC supports NGOs and CSOs around the world by helping to explore policy issues, and by strengthening management and organisational effectiveness.

INTRAC have recently established practice groups within three themes which are facilitated by praxis leaders. The aim of the Praxis Programme is to enable civil society organisations (CSOs) to become more effective through the increased 1) generation of, 2) access to, and 3) exchange of innovative and contextually appropriate approaches to organisational capacity building.

Within the Praxis programme INTRAC currently promotes the Praxis Interchange under the following heading:

> Are the best lessons learned in the field? An evolving, interactive hub, the Praxis Interchange is a resource that allows people to connect and share their knowledge of research and practice. You can add your information by editing the web page content yourself, and you can download resources on Praxis Objectives and Key Topics for free. We believe the Interchange is unique and we urge capacity builders world-wide to get involved in this progressive initiative. (www.intrac.org)

The network BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development) is also relevant to mention here as BOND combines the role of advocacy, campaign, competence development, networking, policy advice and information in one.

> BOND is the United Kingdom's broadest network of voluntary organisations working in international development. BOND, founded in June 1993, now has over 300 members. It is officially recognised by DFID. BOND aims to improve the UK's contribution to international development by promoting the exchange of

experience, ideas and information amongst BOND members between networks of NGOs in the UK and internationally, with the UK Government, and between BOND members and other UK bodies with an interest in international development. To support this work, BOND manages training, advocacy and information services. BOND's work is funded by member subscriptions, income generation, and grants from DFID and the Big Lottery Fund. (www.bond.org.uk)

The focus of BOND is both strategically decided at the Board Meetings and the Annual General Meeting and by the interests and drive by the members. An overall Statement of Principles govern the values, approach and membership, and Multi-annual Strategic Plans co-exist with informal working groups and ad hoc list-serves on critical issues[22].

BOND is one of the networks that really defines itself as such as coined in the following way in the introduction: "BOND facilitates relationship" In the field of advocacy, BOND provides a central point for networking and advocacy on development policy issues where member organisations have a common view and can have a strong collective voice. In the field of competence development, BOND has established a Learning and Training Programme, which offers high quality international development learning opportunities at competitive rates. It is also a way to meet other BOND members and share knowledge and experience. Topical networking in groups is facilitated by the BOND Groups Programme and currently there are 18 Groups working at varying intensity and scope covering issues like capacity development, European Policy, Disability and Development, etc.

The BOND Groups benefit the wider BOND Network through the development of expertise in the sector, by garnering momentum and action for collective advocacy work, and by providing another space for continuing training and development. Groups may also act as a source of advice and capacity building in their specialist area for others in the network. Groups may get support from the secretariat and the training programme.

The Netherlands

Partos is the national platform for Dutch civil society organisations in the international development cooperation sector. It was established in 2003 and now comprise more than 80 members. Partos is both a support and advocacy network:

" Partos supports these organisations in reaching their goals by working to increase professionalism throughout the sector and helping it to position itself clearly in the public eye. An national platform is ideally placed to carry out this task and to help the different parties concerned get to know each other and cooperate more effectively. Partos seeks to coordinate efforts to adopt sector-wide positions on key-issues, stimulate the shaping of a common vision and contribute to improve the quality and professionalism of the sector as a whole" (www.partos.nl)

Partos is currently involved in an innovative initiative seeking to develop quality standards for the voluntary sector.

Germany

In Germany the NGO networking has materialised into an umbrella organisation/association, VENRO, comprising independent and church related NGOs working in the fields of development cooperation, emergency assistance, development education, and advocacy.

"Currently, the Association has 100 member organisations. In addition to the member organisations, local initiatives and small NGOs are represented in VENRO through NGO networks on regional level. Thus, as a

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[22] Consultations with Bond 2006.

network of about 2000, middle and small NGOs, VENRO represents a considerable part of German civil society". VENRO presents itself with three mottos:

* VENRO unites diversity - As a federal association, VENRO supports its members' goals and activities. VENRO stands for the concerted action of several forces in society to overcome poverty worldwide. As a forum in which positions and opinions are developed within the German NGO scene, VENRO is the platform of development civil society. Together with its members, VENRO contributes to developing quality standards and transparency in NGO activities.

* VENRO interferes - VENRO represents the positions of its members in the political arena and sees to it that the diversity of perspectives among NGOs and their special competencies influence development policy.

* VENRO creates networks - VENRO addresses a wide public via strong alliances. Here, it not only relies on national co-operation but also pursues its goals in international alliances, thus contributing know-how and positions of German NGOs to European and global processes. (www.venro.de)

VENRO has both support and advocacy functions and is organised in a Board, a small secretariat and Working Groups covering Themes like Development Education, Co-financing, Disabled, Humanitarian work, European Development Policy and the World Bank.

Some interesting initiatives are illustrated below:

- NGO-IDEAs is an innovative co-operation project involving 14 VENRO members and 32 Indian partners in impact monitoring and the evaluation of savings and credit projects (www.ngo-ideas.net)

- In co-operation with the German Development Institute (GDI/DIE) and the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI), VENRO is running a series of events, Bonner Impulse, on focal issues of European development policy. (www.bonnerimpulse.de)

- With the project Prospects for 2015 (Perspektive 2015), VENRO is running information and educational activities on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and supporting the Federal Government's Programme of Action 2015 from a civil society angle. (www.2015.venro.org)

VENRO has several offices in Germany with around 16 staff and is financed from a number of different sources.

4. VISIONS AND FUTURE SCENARIO

The Focus Question Two is concerned with the long-term vision: "Which other aims and long-term visions could there be for the Danish Networks beyond that of knowledge sharing and capacity development"?

The above has indicated that if wishing to go beyond knowledge sharing and capacity development, the field of agency and advocacy is a straightforward area to explore further. The experience from other countries also strongly argues for re-considering the separation of learning and advocacy and for engaging in monitoring of public policy and enhancing accountability mechanisms. The lessons from the literature indicate that such moves would require a re-birth of the networks with new mandate(s).

The meta-reflection on networking indicates that the Danish Networks would benefit from considering which networking functions they want to become better at, which functions that could be hosted by

members and especially if all functions need to reside within the individual networks. Moreover, a vision of better mastering the art of networking would also serve the networks well.

A mini-scenario workshop was held with representatives from Network Steering Committees and Network Coordinators to solicit visions of the future and possible scenarios.

The visioning exercise was guided by the following questions:

What characterises the relationships – the space- among the Danish NGOs in 2015 when the aims are achieved and the current problems are solved?
What are the purposes – Advocacy? Learning? Or?
What is different from today?
" I wish to see……"

Box 1: Results from visioning and scenario workshop

There is cooperation around values and communication about the strengths of Danish NGO Culture in the wave of globalisation
Collegial networks and technical and professional networking is taking place
The NGO Forum exists as a true policy forum
One joint thematic network exists, which also has dialogue both with NGO Forum and Danida.
Professionalisation and think tanks will be in focus – the form is less important, but slim administration and organisation is key
A joint advocacy network exists
An NGO Knowledge and Competence Centre exists – it is a hothouse with expertise attached, working groups, strategic endorsement from leadership, joint administration of networks, etc.
The Hothouse will be dynamic and strategic in perspective –for this to happen a certain organisational base and coordination/administration is required
Focus on M&E, Advocacy and CD - as today in Thematic Forum – will be high
Focus on linking with South and International networks and i.e. conducting training together with partners in the South
A joint NGO Network operating under the NGO Forum covering both advocacy and agency, learning and CD, consultancy functions, with international links and dynamic working groups exists
The administration percentage has increased with 1% and the percentage returned to the NGOs letting them buy the services they want in the field of competence and capacity development
Own financial contribution to networks exists implying increased ownership and independence
Sub-question: If you had the same funds as now what would you have done differently?
We would have pooled all funds
We would have ensured less dependence on Danida and less red tape
We would have optimised the use of available funding (less overlap and more joint services)
We would start/live together - co-host - rather than being in separate networks thus gaining a lot of energy formerly spent on creating links and cooperation between the networks.

Scenarios for NGO Networks

The following three scenarios were the result of the Scenario Workshop and do not reflect the suggestions of the author of this report. The three scenarios were moreover discussed in a 'Parliament Session', envisioning that the scenarios were being presented at a NGO Network Workshop and the pro and cons were being discussed. The Scenarios are primarily meant to stimulate discussion and reflection about the future of the Danish NGO Network Landscape. It has been agreed that it would be

premature in this report to outline particular implementation models of the various network scenarios, but hopefully future network dynamics will build on the reflections, experiences and perspectives presented in this report. Moreover, any future operationalisation of the one or the other scenario should be a result of a planning and negotiation process among the involved parties.

Scenario I: Continuation of the current set-up
The Networks have developed their own identity and constituency and will continue in the current mode. The emergence of new networks or dismantling of existing ones will depend on their ability to survive within the NGO community. Cooperation among networks will also continue.

Scenario II: A Joint Support Network hosting all current networks (and future ones)
The existing networks functions unfold within a joint network platform, portal and house with joint administrative and coordinative functions, joint Steering Committee and joint fund-raising on core funding. The profile on technical expertise is maintained while the art of networking is improved. Dialogue with Danida, NGO Forum and the NGO Counselling Service is enhanced.

Scenario III: A Joint Advocacy *and* Support Network for Danish NGOs
Scenario III builds on Scenario II and carries the vision of a joint NGO network platform that caters for both the political dimensions of the current NGO Forum and the support function of the technical networks as well as a forest of small crosscutting initiatives. A close relationship exists between the political and strategic levels and the capacity development levels. While building on scenario II, this vision reaches further to reflecting the future role of Civil Society Organisations in the face of current development challenges, and harnesses both support and advocacy network functions as well a broker, monitoring and accountability functions.

These three Scenarios were in no way exhaustive of the possibilities, and the discussions highlighted the need to consider the dimensions of effectiveness and the need/risk of institutionalisation in all three or more scenarios. Further, while the need for some networking structure and a joint platform is recognized, the need for dynamic, organic and sparkling networking activities, which do not necessarily conform or match a certain structure is extremely important. The idea of an NGO Competence and Learning Centre was seen as being possible both under Scenario II and Scenario III, but warnings of creating new structures have also been made. The need to consider closer cooperation with the NGO Counselling Service has also been mentioned.

The discussions at the mini-workshop and overall consultations clearly indicate that:

- The Thematic Networks are considered in a positive light and they are seen as instrumental for capacity development.
- Continuation of the current set-up is neither viable nor desirable.
- The relative importance accorded to Danish Networks vis-à-vis international networks varies greatly from organisation to organisation, but the globalisation of CD and advocacy is a fact.
- A joining of the present networks will address many of the weaknesses and overlaps currently being experienced while also *future-proofing* the network architecture.
- Plenty of "water-holes" and flexible support mechanisms and platforms should exist to nourish local networking initiatives and to avoid monopolisation.
- A visionary and viable future set-up requires the preparedness of all concerned parties to reconsider their role and mandate in light of the 'common good' concerning both joint advocacy and capacity development within the NGO sector.
- There should be a balance between bonding within the NGO sector and reaching out and bridging to other communities and actors.

- A joint structure of the current networks could be seen as a medium-term goal (Scenario II), while a longer-term vision could lie in unifying advocacy and capacity development (support functions) under the NGO Forum (Scenario III).
- An NGO Forum, with a policy/advocacy leg and a support and capacity development leg will help build the bridges between capacity development and organisational change, enhance leadership and serve as a strategic eye on capacity development, provide a channel for up-stream influence from the thematic/technical networks and a down-stream prioritisation from the political level to the operational level.
- In Scenario III a good balance and interaction should be ensured between the advocacy leg and the thematic and capacity building leg drawing on the current strengths of the thematic networks. Risks should also be carefully considered.
- The future relationships should be envisaged beyond networking and be open for other forms of cooperation as deemed most fit for the purpose.

Broader perspectives beyond networking

The last observation regarding moving beyond networks is perhaps the most visionary, as it depicts a situation where the relationships are characterised by many forms of cooperation including networks. It is important to move beyond the path-dependency of the established networks and think anew: What will characterise the relationships between the Danish NGOs in 2015? What are the platforms, modes of cooperation, what is needed and what would be ideal?

The Network Review 2006 also posed the question, if networks (the form) were the right match for the purpose, or if many of the services and activities including the intended impact could be achieved better and more effectively through another form of organisation. (Danida, 2006) Moreover, the context in which the Networks operate has changed significantly over the years.

As noted earlier in the report networks have certain distinctive features and qualities that make them a good means for certain purposes. In many other instances a programme cooperation, alliance or joint-venture may be more appropriate.

The on-going competence development (staff level) and capacity development efforts (organisational praxis) among the Danish NGOs is an example of a task that clearly calls for longer-term cooperation, planning in a strategic perspective, responsiveness to local and international developments and solid budgetary predictability. Some of the learning modalities may be learning networks or linking with thematic networks, but the overall task is perhaps more suited for a *Joint Capacity and Competence Programme Cooperation* in which a certain institutional and technical expertise is also being developed. It is premature to consider if such a programme is best taken care of by boosting and up-grading the training and competence functions of the NGO Counselling Service, by establishing a competence centre or by the NGO Forum hosting/delegating this support function.

Another visionary and longer-term image is the appreciation of the complementary roles played by civil society organisations both in the South and in the North within policy participation, advocacy, capacity development, service provision, information sharing and accountability. For the Danish NGOs the challenge is to break out of the artificial separation between information and advocacy and between capacity development, advocacy and service provision. The vision is that the forms of collaboration within the Danish NGO sector will encompass all these complementary roles and that the Danish Government will apply the same principles in the civil society support in the North as in the South. This vision is close to the present situation in Norway where Norad naturally accepts that organisations supported and financed by Norad may also scrutinize the government and use public funds for an informed debate and representation of views and claims from all interest groups in

society. This vision is also in line with the demand from partners in the South that Danish NGOs will enhance their role as change agents within their own political establishment in Denmark, in Europe and within the international development institutions.

In connection with the revision of the Danida Civil Society Strategy, respondents have argued that collaboration among the NGOs in CD and in advocacy should not be confined to networks only. In light of the above it could be envisaged that the revised CSS should facilitate a conducive framework environment for joint-ventures, cooperation and networking within the Danish NGO Sector with a view to

- Developing the competencies and capacities of the Danish NGOs to engage in rights- and results- based development cooperation with civil society actors and governments and
- Enhancing their role as change agents both in Denmark and in the Global South through strategies of advocacy, information, learning and monitoring for accountability.
- The framework should facilitate:
  - The interlinkages between Danish Networks and international learning and advocacy communities and cooperation partners in the South

  - Flexible support to dynamic networks and initiatives (waterholes) and longer-term support to on-going competence and capacity development programmes. Both Scenario II and Scenario III can materialise here.

  - Joint decision-making among the Danish NGOs on the future architecture of NGO relations in Denmark and the existence of key strategic learning and advocacy networks.

Regarding the fate of the Scenarios or rather of the Networks, a quick force-field analysis at the Scenario Workshop concluded that the Network Steering Committees (including member organisations), the NGO Forum and Danida all have a stake in taking decisions regarding the future landscape. Most consultations have pointed to the need for moving beyond taking decisions at individual network level towards a more comprehensive view of the networking and broader cooperation architecture, and most respondents have pointed to the NGO Forum as the relevant 'forum' to take these deliberations forward.

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ANNEX III: FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AND ACTORS DETERMINING THE FUTURE OF NETWORKS

FACTORS	Significance	ACTORS	Significance
Participation & Attractiveness	High	Network Coordinators	Influence
Demand	High	Steering Committees	Influence
Strategic Importance	High	Danida	Decision Power
Services meet Needs	High	Volunteers/the active	Influence
Active members/volunteers	High	Consultants/Ambassadors	Influence
Added value	High	NGO Forum	Decision Power
Prestige & Branding	Low	PRNGO	Decision Power
Saturation	Medium	"Civil Society Strategy"	Influence/Decision
Organisational overkill	Medium		
Swift to int. networks	Low/High		
Funding	Medium		

Source: Developed during the Scenario Workshop September 19th, 2007

ANNEX IV: NETWORKS, PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

	Establishment	*Progress*	*Achievements/Results*	*Documentation*
Partnerships	Legal relationship	Milestones	Clear aims achieved	Evaluation
	Long phase	Reviews	Product or service oriented	Completion of Contract
	Clear roles	Decision summary	Comparative advantages increase	
	Clear specific aims	Partner Representation	Shared returns	
	Appreciation of the Partner			
Networks	Voluntarimsn	Process oriented	Inspiration New knowledge New access	Satisfaction surveys
	Quick start up	Free form	Varied benefits	Status assessment Continue/end?
	Broad objectives	Explorative	Trustbuilding	Personal evaluation of results/benefits
	Psycho-social contract	Dynamic flow without deadlines	Individual benefits	
	Individual objectives without justification	Personal representation		
Projects	Organisational agreements	Milestones	Clear Aims achieved Results oriented	Evaluation of results
	Both slow and quick establishment	Continues Monitoring and Reporting	Organisational achievements	Drawing of lessons learned
	Clear division of roles	Technical representative	Tangible improvements	Accountability
	Clear specific purposes with justification	Implementation according to plan		

Adapted from Nielsen, 2007

ANNEX V: DEFINITIONS

Communities of practice (CoP)

"Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis. As this definition implies, communities can be very different from each other. Some of the dimensions along which they might be assessed include: membership composition (e.g. very homogeneous or very diverse ones); dispersion (small and community focused, international virtual networks); and purpose (very closely defined purpose or broad and far-reaching). This definition would also include many things that are not CoPs, for example, project teams and so on. Communities and networks are distinct from other kinds of collaborative mechanisms [such as project teams].…. The key distinguishing characteristics are that membership of a CoP is voluntary, and their goals and objectives tend, on the whole, to be fluid rather than determined by management objectives. (Ramalingam, 2006, p.15)

Combining elements of both an epistemic community and a KNET [Knowledge Network], communities of practice are groups of professionals, informally bound to one another through exposure to a common class of problems, common pursuit of solutions, and thereby themselves embodying a store of knowledge' (cited in ODI, 2005: 9)

Knowledge networks

According to Stone and Maxwell (2004: 11 and 89–105), 'knowledge networks incorporate professional bodies, academic research groups and scientific communities that organise around a special subject matter or issue'. By facilitating information exchange, knowledge networks can help to disseminate relevant information and also to advertise important findings, as well as gaps in the existing knowledge base. If the knowledge network includes a number of influential individuals, then it may be a vital tool in bridging research and policy. However, much of the literature warns of the difficulties in establishing successful knowledge networks, which may suffer from the inefficient use of resources or conflict arising between politically heterogeneous actors (see also Bernard, 1996; Rai, 2003).

Social Network Analysis
Ramalingam offers a description of SNA related to *knowledge and learning.* Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a research technique that focuses on identifying and comparing the relationships within and between individuals, groups and systems in order to model the real-world interactions at the heart of organisational knowledge and learning processes. Whereas an organisation chart shows formal relationships of function and responsibility, SNA aims to illuminate informal relationships: 'who knows whom' and 'who shares with whom'. This allows leaders to visualise and understand the diverse relationships that either facilitate or impede knowledge sharing. 'Because these relationships are normally invisible, SNA is sometimes referred to as an 'organisational X-ray' – showing the real networks that operate underneath the surface organisational structure' (see: www.library.nhs.uk/knowledgemanagement).

After social relationships and knowledge flows become visible, they can be evaluated, compared and measured. Results of SNA can then be applied at the level of individuals, departments or organisations to:
• Identify those (individuals and groups) playing central roles (thought leaders, key knowledge

brokers, information managers, etc).
• Identify bottlenecks and those isolated.
• Spot opportunities to improve knowledge flow.
• Target those where better knowledge sharing will have the most impact.
• Raise awareness of the significance of informal networks. (Ramalingam, 2006, 15)

ANNEX VI: SYNTHESIS OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

The following synthesis (in English and Danish) was generated by AidsNet and the Danish Child and Youth Network in order to help answer Focus Question One: When and how have the Networks contributed the most to improving the quality of the Danish NGOs work and performance?

- Networks are particularly good as catalysts for different types of cooperation between quite different, which has resulted in concrete activities.
- Netværk er særligt gode til at være *katalysator for forskellige type samarbejder* mellem ulige organisationer (Aidsnet har fx skabt grundlag for samarbejdet 'Humor mod Aids' af FKN, Ibis og Aids Fondet, ADRA Danmark og Sex & Samfund, Projektrådgivningen og Aids-Fondet), som er blevet omsat i konkrete aktiviteter;
- Network are good at facilitating contact between researchers and NGOs, which has lead to a number of studies, coaching sessions etc.
- Netværk er gode til at *formidle kontakt mellem forskere og NGO'er* (fx Folkekirkens Nødhjælp og Institut for Antropologi, ADRA Danmark og RUC, Sex & Samfund og Lunds Universitet), hvilket har affødt en række studier, coaching forløb, etc.;
- Networks contribute to a more smooth dialogue between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Danish NGOs
- Netværk bidrager til at smidiggøre *den faglige dialog mellem Udenrigsministeriet og de danske NGO'er* i form af erfaringsopsamling (fx i forhold til UMs pulje om innovative hiv/aids projekter);
- Networks have possibility of publishing material at a more advanced level than if it was issued by an individual NGO, which in turn can strengthen knowledge building among members
- Netværk har mulighed for at udgive materiale, der bevæger sig et niveau højere end hvis det var udgivet af en enkelt NGO, som kan styrke vidensopbygningen blandt medlemmerne (fx undervisningsmateriale, guidelines, manualer, antologier)
- The Networks have created a common space for the member organisations, which reflects the diversity of organisations and the Networks have managed to be a relevant and attractive forum for both small and large organisations.
- Netværkene har skabt et *fælles rum* for de organisationer, er arbejder med børn og unge. Medlemskredsen vurderes at afspejle den mangfoldighed af organisationer, der er engageret i dansk udviklingsarbejde og netværket har formået at være et relevant og attraktivt forum for store professionelle som små frivillige organsiationer.
- The Network has been a catalyst in getting children and youth on the agenda of the Danish Development Policy.
- Netværket har været en katalysator i at få sat *børn og unge på den danske udviklingsdagsorden.* Netværket har bidraget til at udvikle og fastholde opmærksomheden på børn og unge som et tværgående men ellers ofte overset emne i både NGO-bistanden og den bilaterale bistand på en faglig velkvalificeret måde, der kombinerer praksis og teori.
- The Network has ensured capacity development for both small volunteer organisations and the larger professional NGOs.
- Netværket har *sikret kapacitetsudvikling* for såvel små frivillige organisationer som de større professionelle. Reviewet har en yderst positiv vurdering af netværket og dets betydning for at opbygge kapacitet hos og fremme erfaringsudveksling mellem medlemsorganisationer inden for temaet udviklingsbistand til børn og unge og er ".. et meget aktivt netværk, der udbyder stribevis af relevante aktiviteter til stor tilfredshed for deltagerne" (Review af BU Net, 2006);
- Networks create confidence among staff with thematic/issue responsibilities, which in turn facilitates that true cooperation is nourished.
- Netværk skaber tillid mellem fagmedarbejdere, som gør det muligt at få ægte samarbejder op at stå.