

PLACE in networks

Drew Mackie - November 2019

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This little note sets out a set of factors that should be considered for any netmapping exercise.

People

People are the active ingredients of a network. It is the interaction between people that creates the exchanges of information, skills, resources and ideas that form any network. Even if we are mapping organisations, it is the people in these organisations that are creating and maintaining the links.

Locality

Some networks are place based. Their links are developed and maintained through proximity. But even in a localised network there will be links to external actors who may provide skills and resources that the network needs. Alternatively a network may be based on common interest or complementary skills and resources.

Activity

Activities power a network. People make connections for a reason - to supplement the resources they need for a particular project, to gain advice, to share a common interest and so on. Their connections are driven by the range of activities they engage in.

Connection

The exchanges between nodes form connections that may extend beyond their original intention. Once a connection is formed it may be used or built on for another purpose. Connections are the basis of 'networking' and conversations with one person can lead to referrals to another.

Effectiveness

Networks can be effective and beneficial for their members but that effectiveness is often created by the characteristics of the network itself - **the sum is greater than its parts**. Increasing connectivity across the network can improve the performance of the network as a whole and benefit its individual members. On the other hand network characteristics may work against the intended effect of the network - e.g. groups may form very separated clusters and connectivity may be very 'lumpy'.